

Project Dissertation Report on

FLASH SALES IMPACT ON E-COMMERCE

BUSINESS

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CERTIFICATE FROM THE INSTITUTE

This is to certify that the Major Research Project Report titled “**FLASH SALES IMPACT ON E-COMMERCE BUSINESS**” is a bonafide work carried out by **Ms. Vineet Kaur** of MBA 2017-19 and submitted to Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, Bawana Road, Delhi-42 in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Masters of Business Administration.

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DECLARATION

I, Vineet Kaur, student of MBA batch 2017-19 of Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, Bawana Road, Delhi-42 declare that Major Research Project Report on **“FLASH SALES IMPACT ON E-COMMERCE BUSINESS”** submitted in partial fulfillment of Degree of Masters of Business Administration is the original work conducted by me.

The information and data given in the report is authentic to the best of my knowledge.

This Report is not being submitted to any other University for award of any other Degree, Diploma and Fellowship.

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I perceive this opportunity as a big milestone in my career development. I will strive to use gained skills and knowledge in the best possible way, and I will continue to work on their improvement, in order to attain desired career objectives. Hope to continue cooperation with all of you in the future.

Yours Sincerely,

Vineet Kaur

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Indian E-commerce industry is growing multifold and is expected to reach \$20 Billion by 2020. This is due to changing mind-set of the Indian customers and ease of shopping online. Major Indian E-commerce companies have come up with strategies year on year to lure the customers – Flash sales one amongst them. Flash sales such as Flipkart’s – ‘Big Billion Day’, Amazon. In- “Great Indian Shopping Festival” and Snapdeal’s- ‘Unbox Zindagi (Unbox Life)’ provide promotional sales on deeply discounted prices on major Indian festivals. The objective of the study is to understand the impact of flash sales such as coupons, sample, price discount and buy one get one free as a sales promotion tool on consumer behaviour and consequently on revenues, sales, traffic and logistics of 3 major Ecommerce platforms of India i.e. Flipkart, Amazon and Snapdeal. Data related to the flash sales of 3 major online retailers from 2011 to 2018 viz Flipkart, Snapdeal and Amazon, was collected from secondary sources in order to analyse the impact of Flash sales on E commerce companies with respect to sales, revenues, website traffic and logistics. The study will help e-commerce companies understand the impact of flash sales for them.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

A. About the Ecommerce industry in India

E-commerce, the platform where sellers register to sell & buyers register to buy, has changed the shape of many industries in India. Currently the internet user base in India stands approximately at 402 million [1]. A report by Nasscom and Akamai Technologies predicts that 75% of new internet users will come from rural India [2]. Rise in quality of internet services, rising middle class with disposable income, user experience & rising mobile penetration are major drivers for rise in e-commerce sector [3]. Other incubators to the rise of online retail industry of India include better living standards, growth in cities beyond metros, growing investment in logistics and warehouses, busy lifestyles with lack of time for offline shopping, much wider product choice, and rising online categorized sites [4, 5]. Forrester predicts that in Asia-Pacific region, India will have the one of the highest growth in e-commerce sector across the globe [6].

Much growth of the industry has been triggered by increasing internet and smartphone penetration. The ongoing digital transformation in the country is expected to increase India's total internet user base to 829 million by 2021 from 560.01 million as of September 2018 [7]. India's internet economy is expected to double from US\$125 billion as of April 2017 to US\$ 250 billion by 2020, majorly backed by ecommerce. India's E-commerce revenue is expected to jump from US\$ 39 billion in 2017 to US\$ 120 billion in 2020, growing at an annual rate of 51 per cent, the highest in the world. The e-commerce industry in India caters to different sectors such as online travel, fashion, electronics etc. New sectors that are emerging in e-commerce include medicines, sale of luxury jeweller items, and furniture [8].

B. Market Size

Propelled by rising smartphone penetration, the launch of 4G networks and increasing consumer wealth, the Indian e-commerce market is expected to grow to US\$ 200 billion by 2026 from US\$ 38.5 billion in 2017 Online retail sales in India are expected to grow by 31 per cent to touch US\$ 32.70 billion in 2018, led by Flipkart, Amazon India and Paytm Mall.

During 2018, electronics is currently the biggest contributor to online retail sales in India with a share of 48 per cent, followed closely by apparel at 29 per cent.

C. Investments/ Developments

Some of the major developments in the Indian e-commerce sector are as follows:

- Flipkart, after getting acquired by Walmart for US\$ 16 billion, is expected to launch more offline retail stores in India to promote private labels in segments such as fashion and electronics. In September 2018, Flipkart acquired Israel based analytics start-up Upstream Commerce that will help the firm to price and position its products in an efficient way.
- Paytm has launched its bank - Paytm Payment Bank. Paytm bank is India's first bank with zero charges on online transactions, no minimum balance requirement and free virtual debit card
- As of June 2018, Google is also planning to enter into the E-commerce space by November 2018. India is expected to be its first market.
- E-commerce industry in India witnessed 21 private equity and venture capital deals worth US\$ 2.1 billion in 2017 and 40 deals worth US\$ 1,129 million in the first half of 2018.
- Google and Tata Trust have collaborated for the project 'Internet Saathi' to improve internet penetration among rural women in India

D. Government Initiatives

Since 2014, the Government of India has announced various initiatives namely, Digital India, Make in India, Start-up India, Skill India and Innovation Fund. The timely and effective implementation of such programs will likely support the e-commerce growth in the country. Some of the major initiatives taken by the government to promote the e-commerce sector in India are as follows:

In order to increase the participation of foreign players in the e-commerce field, the Indian Government hiked the limit of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the E-commerce marketplace model for up to 100 per cent (in B2B models).

In the Union Budget of 2018-19, government has allocated Rs 8,000 crore (US\$ 1.24 billion) to Bharat Net Project, to provide broadband services to 150,000 gram panchayats

As of August 2018, the government is working on the second draft of e-commerce policy, incorporating inputs from various industry stakeholders.

E. Achievements

Following are the achievements of the government in the past four years:

- Under the Digital India movement, government launched various initiatives like Udaan, Umang, Start-up India Portal etc.
- Under the project 'Internet Saathi', the government has influenced over 16 million women in India and reached 166,000 villages
- Udaan, a B2B online trade platform that connect small and medium size manufacturers and wholesalers with online retailers and also provide them logistics, payments and technology support, has sellers in over 80 cities of India and delivers to over 500 cities.
- According to the UN's eGovernance index, India has jumped 11 positions to 107 in 2016 from 118 in 2014.
- The government introduced Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM), a simple mobile based platform for digital payments.

F. Ecommerce Boom

There are multifarious factors, which have led to this massive ecommerce boom in India. Various economists, analysts and researchers trace back its root to the internet fruition in India but there are many other factors too, like increase in spending power, the influx of more payment options with debit & credit cards, smartphone penetration etc. Here are the ecommerce dynamics, which are leading to its superfluous growth in India:

1. Commercial Factors

- **Cheaper Rates** – The scale on which ecommerce operates is huge thus sellers are able to offer great discounts and slashed prices. It excites a budget-wary consumer as well as the random shoppers.
- **The developing logistics** – Advanced logistics solutions have made the delivery process easier and faster making the people more thrilled about online shopping. Retailers are succeeding enough in reaching the doorsteps earlier than promised.
- **Segment specific growth** – The biggest impact in Indian online shopping has been made by the travel industry. Around 75% of it is encompassed by hotels booking, air ticketing, holiday packages etc.
- **Internet Progression** – Web is a place that allows users to find, compare and explore things that satisfy their needs. There are many brands which are not easily and nearly available in each city of India. To shop them online is thus the best and favored option as internet is widely available to people now. The cheaper rates of internet have significantly added to trending ecommerce.
- **Smartphones Industry on rise** – The rise in smartphones and tablets demand has pushed the price down. The market is bound to grow even more as more than 8,000 new smartphones are being sold each day. The tablet market is evaluated to have sold 1 million of it in 2013 alone.

2. Technical Factors

- **The faster & accessible Internet** – Advancement in New media technology has boosted the accessibility, which in turn supports the buying needs. The internet was in its budding state ten years ago but today it is better & faster with 3G and 4G entering Indian domain. So, the ecommerce sellers are guaranteed to make headway in business too.
- **Smartphones advanced technology** – The more technologically advanced Smartphones have come forward as the biggest promoter of e-shopping trend and lifted the online sales figure up. The ease they deliver makes the online shopping experience pleasurable for buyers.

- **Extending Mobility** – A report published by Ernst and Young states that 4G and smartphone revolution in India is going to change the face of media reach in India. India is said to have 1 billion wireless subscribers, as of May 2012. This extending mobility has created a situation where reaching out to rural India is not a trouble anymore. Mobiles are more accessible than newspapers and electricity today.
- **Faster+cheaper Broadband** – 2G, 3G and now 4G, this development chain has created many netizens in India. People are found to have caught the fancy of staying online and that's a positive sign for ecommerce consumption.

3. Demographic Factors

- **Consumer stance** – The success of ecommerce platforms like OLX and Quikr has heightened the trusts of Indian consumers in online buying & selling. They have generated a positive outlook towards online marketplace that supports ecommerce industry.
- **'Online' means 'onlife' nowadays** – Almost every activity takes place online these days, whether it is ordering food, mailing a friend, searching a job or booking a bus ticket. The average time spent per month has increased from 12.9 to 17.4 and by 2015 it is expected to touch the mark of 21.
- **Rise in disposable income** – It has significantly added to this sea-change. The spending power has risen and people are more willing to indulge in regular shopping.
- **Computer literacy rate** – With overall improvement in education rate, the number of people disposed to computers is also increasing. Educated people are seen to be more active in online purchase than the less educated group.

4. Social Factors

- **Boom of Social Media** – The social bombardment on web is pushing the online shopping industry by making the consumer savvier. Brands are getting a way to bridge the gap with its potential buyers through these networks. India has the Facebook's third-largest audience population in the world after the US and Brazil. According to statistics, there is a big fraction of people who use

internet first time for just using social networks and turn into regular internet users soon.

- **Changing Lifestyle** – Urbanization has changed the lifestyle and people’s needs have changed too. As per United Nations, more than 31% of India’s population resides in urban areas and the shopping needs of urban people are quite more than the rural ones.
- **Globalization-** The socio-economic structure of India is heavily influenced by Globalization. Development on trade, economy & communication grounds have led to a state where people think globally and act uniformly.
- **Young population** – India has a major segment of young people that is likely to reach 64% by 2020. Hence, younger generation is the key factor behind this immense growth. With youngest generations growing tech savvy, the eldest of families too are motivated to explore internet.
- **Product Line** – The bigger portion of these online stores consists of Apparel and other consumer goods which people do not feel apprehensive to spend on.
- **Media Reach** – FM, Television and outdoors reach in people’s lives is a chief cause of Indian consumers’ growing inclination towards online shopping. It impacts their buying tendencies to a great measure.
- **Digitalization** – The state of National growth and everything being digitalized is evoking confidence and attraction in people to go online for fulfilling their routine needs.

CHAPTER II: SNAPSHOT OF E-COMMERCE COMPANIES

Flipkart- statistics & facts

Flipkart was founded in October 2007. It is one of India's leading e-commerce marketplaces, with headquarters in Bengaluru. Flipkart was founded by Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal and the company initially started as an online book store. Later it also started selling other items such as music, movies and mobile phones. Now the company offers more than 80 million products spread across more than 80 categories. It has the capacity to delivery 8 million shipments per month. [9]

The service competes primarily with Amazon's Indian subsidiary, and the domestic rival Snapdeal as of March 2017, Flipkart held a 39.5% market share of India's e-commerce industry. Flipkart is significantly dominant in the sale of apparel (a position that was bolstered by its acquisitions of Myntra and Jabong.com), and was described as being "neck and neck" with Amazon in the sale of electronics and mobile phones. Flipkart also owns PhonePe, a mobile payments service based on the Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

In August 2018, U.S.-based retail chain Walmart acquired a 77% controlling stake in Flipkart for US\$16 billion, valuing it at \$22 billion.

- 2018 Walmart acquired 77 per cent stake in Flipkart for US\$ 16 billion.
- 2017 PhonePe crosses 10 million download on Google Playstore. Softbank Vision Fund invested in Flipkart after which Flipkart had in excess of US\$ 4 billion of cash on its balance sheet
- 2016 Crossed 100 million registered customers. Acquire 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 Pay Zippy, 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.

Amazon- statistics & facts

Amazon.com is an international e-commerce company offering online retail, computing services, consumer electronics, digital content as well as other local services such as daily deals and groceries. According to recent industry figures, Amazon is the leading e-retailer in the United States with close to 232 billion U.S. dollars in 2018 net sales. The majority of the company's revenues are generated through e-retail sales of electronics and other products, followed by third-party seller revenues, subscription services and AWS activities. Due to Amazon's global scope and reach, it is also considered one of the most valuable brands worldwide.

Amazon is guided by four principles: customer obsession rather than competitor focus, passion for invention, commitment to operational excellence, and long-term thinking. Customer reviews, 1-Click shopping, personalized recommendations, Prime, Fulfillment by Amazon, AWS, Kindle Direct Publishing, Kindle, Fire tablets, Fire TV, Amazon Echo, and Alexa are some of the products and services pioneered by Amazon. [10]

- 1994 – Cadabra Inc is incorporated in Washington State.
- 1995 – Cadabra becomes Amazon and goes live as an online bookstore
- 1996 – Amazon incorporates in Delaware
- 1997 – Amazon goes public
- 1998 – Amazon purchases IMDB
- 1999 – Jeff Bezos named Time Person of the Year
- 2001 – Amazon turns its first profit
- 2008 – Amazon purchases Audible
- 2009 – Amazon purchases Zappos

- 2013 – Amazon purchases Goodreads
- 2014 – Amazon purchases Twitch
- 2017 – Amazon purchases Whole Foods
- 2018 – Amazon purchases Ring
- 2018 – Amazon announces it will open 2 additional headquarters (Crystal City, VA and New York, NY)

Snapdeal- statistics & facts

Snapdeal is an Indian e-commerce company based in New Delhi, India. The company was started by Kunal Bahl and Rohit Bansal in February 2010. As of 2014, Snapdeal had 3,00,000 sellers, over 3 crore products across 800+ diverse categories from over 1,25,000 regional, national, and international brands and retailers and a reach of 6,000 towns and cities across the country.^[3]

Investors in the company include SoftBank Corp, Ru-Net Holdings, Tybourne Capital, PremjiInvest, Alibaba Group, Temasek Holdings, Bessemer Venture Partners, IndoUS Ventures, Kalaari Capital, Saama Capital, Foxconn Technology Group, Blackrock, eBay, Nexus Ventures, Intel Capital, Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, Singapore-based investment entity Brother Fortune Apparel and Ratan Tata.^[4] In April 2015, Snapdeal acquired FreeCharge for \$400 million, but resold the mobile-payments company in 2017.

Snapdeal.com is an online marketplace, featuring a wide assortment of products across categories like Mobiles, Electronics, Fashion accessories, Apparel, Sports, Books; and services like Restaurants, Spas & Entertainment amongst others.

Number of Snapdeal sellers: 300,000

Number of products available on Snapdeal: 60 million products

Number of Snapdeal employees: 1,300 employees

Number of cities and towns that Snapdeal ships to: 6,000

Number of featured brands on Snapdeal: 6000+

Number of product categories on Snapdeal: 800

CHAPTER III FLASH SALES

Flash sales are often referred to as daily deals or deal-of-the day. These sales are an e-Commerce business model in which a site offers a single or limited product selection for a discounted price over a short period of time. Sales typically last anywhere between just a few hours to 24-36 hours.

A. History of flash sales

Flash sales often happen during shopping holidays like Black Friday or Cyber Monday, but are also used throughout the entire year to increase sales.

Flash sales became popular when the site Woot.com launched in 2004. The site featured a different sale every day for only 24 hours. Within a few years, there were over a hundred different sites that offered a similar format. Today, there are over 500 sites in America. Notable daily deal sites include Groupon, Zulily, and Living Social.

The popularity of flash sales in the U.S. went hand in hand with the economic recession in 2008. Flash sales offered extremely cheap items that consumers were willing to buy. The short time periods made sales exciting and fun.

B. Why companies run a flash sale

Ecommerce sellers know too well the race to having the lowest price. Today's informed consumers can easily research, compare, and buy from the sellers with the lowest price. A flash sale is an opportunity to give consumers exactly what they're looking for. Then, running the deal for a short period of time gives customers that extra jolt to act fast and buy now. And, merchants see results. Overall, flash sales reportedly generate a 35% lift in transaction rates.

While flash sales do help sellers compete on price, that's not their only advantage. There are many reasons why a seller would run a limited sale. They could want to get rid of excess inventory. Some use it as a tactic to lure in new customers in hopes of retaining them afterwards. Others look for increasing overall sales and profit.

Whatever be the reasons, a flash sale could be just what sellers need to try something different. On the other hand, flash sales aren't for everyone. Since then, flash sales

sites like Groupon have experienced a rise and fall of success. In 2010, Groupon launched its IPO with a valued price around \$13 billion. Within a year, they lost about 80% of its stock values. Over the years, many of the smaller daily deal sites have either downsized, gone out of business, or revamped to a more traditional selling style.

C.Planning a Flash Sale

A successful flash sale has a few key components:

- Targeted audience
- Thoughtful marketing and promotion
- Right price
- Available inventory for projected demand
- Automated backend processes

While these components sound simple enough, there's a lot of work that goes into them. Sellers choose their audience and determine that they're interested in your product. Email marketing and social media promotion is planned ahead of time and is enticing. The offer is such that it stands out among the dozen other discount offers.

The price is set right. Discount offered is big enough to send people running to the site.

Sometimes sellers want to get rid of some extra inventory. However, it's safe to have enough inventory to satisfy the customers. Customers don't want to rush to any site, order a product, and then find out that the seller actually don't have enough inventory to ship their order. Those customers will be quick on social outlets to voice their disappointment in their negative experience.

Most of the preparation for a flash sales goes back to whom the seller is targeting, what products they are selling, and how they want to sell those products.

However, flash sales take more than just careful planning of the audience and products. Sellers must have the right backend processes to execute the sale. Even those with the best intentions and thoughtful frontend preparation end up ruining their brand with flash sales.

D. Coupons

Coupons considered as one of the most used tools by marketers to stimulate consumers by giving them a voucher or certificate that save some money when they want to purchase any type of products later on or in the future, such as 25% reduction from the main price or a fixed discounted amount like 5\$ per piece. Coupons have been existed to produce product trial. According to Cook (2003) customers can easily be convinced with the coupons technique since it is very useful tool for trial buying, and it considered as a good way to be used to induce customers brand switching.

Some researchers indicated that consumers are influenced by the price reduction in the given coupons, so coupons used to be as a smart sales tool (Peter and Olson, 1996; Gardener and Trivedi, 1998; Dark, 2000). According to Nudubisi and Tung (2005) coupons have many benefits and trends towards the marketers in a way that they can boom the sales in a short period of time and they can stimulate customers to switch to other brands or products.

Kotler and Armstrong (2006) examined the electronic coupon machines as a good tool to save customers purchasing history, and based on that, voucher will be offered depends on customer current bill and on the pervious purchased amount. On the other hand, some researchers showed that coupon is ineffective tool to be used as sales promotion; these studies examined customers behavior towards the huge price reduction offered by coupons; since it can affect the value of any product negatively, and that can lead to an influence on product trial (Silva-Risso and Bucklin, 2004; Gilbert and Jackaria, 2002).

E. Price discount

According to Fill (2002) price reduction is a valuation approach where goods or products are offered in a good discounted buying price and it seems to be a reduced cost to the consumers, mostly applied in hypermarkets and point of purchase displays. Price discount is “reduce the price for a given quantity or increase the quantity available at the same price, thereby enhancing value and create an economic incentive to purchase” (Raghubir and Corfman, 1999). Other studies found that price discounts (cut off prices) playing an important role in stimulating new customers’ behaviors to

try the offered products (Brandweek, 1994; Blackwell, Miniard and Engel, 2001; Fill, 2002; Shimp, 2003).

Short-term peaks (seasonal) in sales usually attracted the occasional users of the same brand more likely than getting new customers to purchase the discounted good, moreover, these occasional users after getting benefit of this promoted good would most likely get back to their preferable brand or type rather than buying that promoted brand at full price after the discounted season (Ehrenberg et al., 1994). According to Percy (2001) consumers are more likely to be attracted to price discount promotions. Ndubisi and Chiew (2006) claimed that product trial has a relationship with price discount, in a sense that the first can be increased by price reduction for any product.

Others stated that price reduction has a relationship with different promotion tools in a way that they are affecting each other and pushing the customers to buy the product, such as coupons and samples (Huff and Alden, 1998; Krishna and Zhang, 1999; Mela et al., 1997; Gilbert and Jackaria, 2002). It is also indicated that a huge discounted price for any product which happened to be in sales seasons would exercise by dealers because of consumer's price awareness (Kopalle and Mela, 1999; Banks and Moorthy, 1999; Smith and Sinha, 2000).

F. Buy one get one free

According to Sinha & Smith (2000) Buy one get one free defined as one of the common used promotion tools of sales promotion, in a sense that if you buy one product, you get another one for no cost, by using this technique the customer can be easily attracted to buy the product because there is no additional cost and it should be more valued from the customer perspective, therefore customer can't ignore such great deal. The bonus packages and extra products without cost inspire the customer buying behavior to purchase the product; because customers are getting good feeling towards such offer especially if it is in large sizes packages and properly advertised.

Moreover, such promotions increasing product trial and customers switching (Gardener and Trivedi, 1998; Percy, Rossiter, and Elliott, 2001). According to Li, Sun & Wang (2007) Buy one get one free type promotions is a very helpful tool especially to marketers and manufactures who want to clear their stock more quickly.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the research is to study the impact of flash sales such as coupons, sample, price discount and buy one get one free as a sales promotion tool on consumer behaviour and consequently analyse the impact of flash sales on revenues, sales, traffic and logistics of 3 major Ecommerce platforms of India i.e. Flipkart, Amazon and Snapdeal. In order to meet the above objectives, the following research questions were considered for study:

- Do the sales promotion tools (coupons, sample, price discount and buy one get one free) have significant impact on consumer buying behaviour?
- Do flash sales affect the revenues of an ecommerce company?
- Do flash sales affect the sales of an ecommerce company?
- Do flash sales affect the website traffic of an ecommerce company?
- Do flash sales affect the logistics of an ecommerce company?

CHAPTER IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Flash sales as a promotion tool for the ecommerce industry

Flash sales in case of E-commerce industry can be defined as shopping intermediaries that are used as promotional means to promote market and distribute goods such as electronics, clothing, etc. at deeply discounted prices. The potential uses of flash deals or daily deals have caught the attention of many restaurant and hotel firms, as well as third-party distributors, such as Expedia. Piccoli and Dev (2012) [11] conducted a survey of nearly 200 international hospitality practitioners and found that a remarkable 42 percent had tested a flash deal promotion, and some of those firms had offered numerous flash deals. At the same time, 46 percent of the responding hospitality firms had no intention of offering a flash deal, with some citing concerns about the potential damage of group discounts to brand integrity. Individual hotels that had offered flash deals tended to be on the large side, averaging more than 150 rooms. Discounts offered in the deals ranged widely, from 15 to over 75 percent off rack rates. They agreed that their deals brought in new customers.

Although the use of online coupons is increasing in popularity in the tourism industry, there is limited research investigating the design and the implementation of online coupons that maximizes their business benefits. Sigala (2013) [12] aimed to fill in this gap by developing a holistic framework demonstrating how tourism firms can effectively design and implement online coupons

Aday and Phelan (2015) [13] aimed to identify the representativeness of hospitality and service industry firms on flash-sale sites such as Groupon and LivingSocial. Currently, academic findings related to the frequency of offerings from these firms are non-existent. This research relied upon a content analysis rubric and daily measurement of offerings from randomly selected cities represented by Groupon and LivingSocial for a period of 6 weeks.

Lee and Lee (2012) [14] defined flash sales as electronic distribution channels that are used for time limited heavy discounts for the advance purchase of products or services. They are also referred as sometimes Daily Deals [8]. Ayadi; Giraud and Gonzalez (2013) [15] conducted a study using qualitative research methods, this study differentiates four segments of consumers, according to their reactions to repeated

purchase temptations: myopic, self-regulated, hyperopic, and dispassionate. It also isolates the mechanism that consumers use to resist temptations.

Kim and Martinez (2013) [16] study was designed to divide shoppers of private sale sites into distinct fashion consumer groups based on their levels of fashion leadership, and to examine their differences in shopping behaviours. Data were collected from a convenience sample of 164 women aged 18 and older who were members of at least one private sale site. The respondents were divided into four groups, named fashion followers, fashion opinion leaders, fashion innovators and innovative communicators, based on their scores on the two dimensions of fashion leadership. The significantly higher levels of visit frequency and purchase intention for innovative communicators indicate that this group represents a valuable market segment for online private sale companies to target.

E-Retail platforms are discount driven, as it's a highly competitive market in India. Such discounts if offered by an online seller, for a limited period of time or on a specific occasion such as a festival are termed as flash sales [17].

Blattberg et al. (2015) [18] article helped the reader understand how promotions work. They identified and explain empirical generalizations related to sales promotion; that is, effects that have been found consistently in multiple studies involving different researchers. They also identified issues which generated conflicting findings in the research, as well as important sales promotion topics that have not yet been studied. This overview of the research and findings from the sales promotion literature is intended to offer direction for future research in the area.

Miller (2016) [19] explained FLASH sale Web sites, a thriving e-commerce trend to promote limited-time sales, started as a way for brands to unload excess inventory in a controlled, high-end place. But now they have become something else: a way to advertise and find new customers, many of whom visit the sites of the brands and buy full-price merchandise soon after the sales.

Flash sales help online e-commerce sites to grow at a higher pace as they encounter huge sales of products, along with higher profitability [8, 15, and 16]. Ostapenko (2013) [20] explained that excess inventory could also be uploaded quickly, and sold quickly turning this into a benefit for the portal. Pricing in flash sales is done in such a way that, the conversion of inventory to cash becomes very fast (e.g. Groupon

Gateways, Jetsetter). Similarly, in case of travel sector LivingSocial Escapes, a deal website once partnered with more than 800 different properties simultaneously and was able to sell more than 600,000 room nights around the globe in a single year [21].

The prime goals that could be accomplished by Flash Sales include: increased profits, get new customers, manage inventory, more brand usage and higher market growth. Some other goals accomplished by flash sales include: filling immediate occupancy needs; increasing exposure; reaching to new customer market segments and include first customer trials. Flash sales websites (e.g., Groupon, LivingSocial) are shopping intermediaries that provide a promotional means to market and distribute goods and services at deeply discounted prices.

Berezina and Semrad (2015) [22] conducted a study to provide a preliminary assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of hotel room inventory distribution by way of flash sales websites. Forty-six industry professionals were interviewed regarding their experience with flash sales promotions. The results of the study revealed that plausible advantages of using flash sales included filling immediate occupancy needs, increasing exposure, reaching new customer market segments, and inducing first time customer trials. Potential disadvantages of using flash sales for hotel room inventory distribution may fall in the categories of facing high distribution costs, violating rate parity, and experiencing negative impacts on hotel brand and revenue generation. Overall, hotel managers reported that hotel flash sales may serve as an effective distribution and marketing channel when clearly aligned with hotel's goals and needs

Price promotions and non-monetary promotions, and also sales promotions always create a positive effect on the evaluation of the product and its purchase intention by the customer.

Chang c (2009) [23] studied about how as an emerging distribution channel, online discount websites are gaining popularity among luxury hotels. However, little guidance on the effectiveness of such price promotions in luxury hotels is provided in the extant literature. Building on the status consumption theories, he examined the joint effects of price promotions and need for status (NFS) on consumers' attitudes toward the hotel as well as their intentions to return. Results indicated that consumers who are high in NFS exhibit less favorable attitudes toward the luxury hotel and a

lower likelihood to return on having learned that the hotel plans to implement price promotions through discount websites. On the contrary, customers who are low in NFS are unaffected by the presence of price promotions via discount websites. Therefore, luxury hotels that traditionally attract consumers high in NFS need to be aware that using price promotions via discount websites might have a detrimental effect on consumers' perceptions of the hotel. [24, 25, 26, 27, 28].

Cotton and Babb (1978) [25] The objective of the study was to better understand the factors that influence consumers' responses toward gift promotions. Specifically, the aim is to analyse four variables: the nature of the promoted product, the fit between the product and the gift, the type of brand used in the promotion and the deal-proneness. Results indicated that the nature of the promoted product does not influence consumer response. Overall evaluation of gift promotions is more favourable when simultaneously the brand promoted has high equity and the fit between the promoted product and the gift is high. Offering a gift that fits with the product and using high equity brands is a wise strategy to positively influence purchase intentions. Findings also showed that deal proneness has a positive impact on purchase intentions.

Buil et al. (2015) [29] conducted a study to propose and test a model to better understand brand equity. It seeks to investigate the effects of this construct on consumers' responses using data from two European countries. Hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM). Measurement invariance and stability of the model across the two national samples was assessed using multigroup confirmatory factor analysis. Results indicate that brand equity dimensions inter-relate. Brand awareness positively impacts perceived quality and brand associations. Brand loyalty is mainly influenced by brand associations. Finally, perceived quality, brand associations and brand loyalty are the main drivers of overall brand equity. The major role in case of flash sales has been played by price promotions, which in turn can change the long-term brand association for a customer.

Chandon et al. (2000) [30] discussed the construction of a framework of the multiple consumer benefits of a sales promotion. Through a series of measurement studies, the authors find that monetary and nonmonetary promotions provide consumers with different levels of 3 hedonic benefits (opportunities for value expression, entertainment and exploration) and 3 utilitarian benefits (savings, higher product

quality, and improved shopping convenience). To address the second question, the researchers developed a benefit congruency framework, which argues that a sales promotion's effectiveness is determined by the utilitarian or hedonic nature of the benefits it delivers and the congruence these benefits have with the promoted product. Among other results, 2 choice experiments showed that as predicted for high-equity brands monetary promotions are more effective for utilitarian products than for hedonic products.

Christou (2011) [31] proposed a model that incorporates various facets related to customers' exploitation of online sales promotions and focuses on the relationship between hotel customers' beliefs, attitude, and purchasing behavior. The model fit was tested through structural equation modelling analysis (SEM) and results indicated significant support for the hypothesized paths. The suggested pattern appears to influence behavior towards online promotion deals, and certain trait variables had considerable impact on the process

Price promotions also create a positive impact on the purchase volume [32,33].

Susskind (2004) [34] asked for customer reactions to specific demand-shifting tactics based on revenue management, patrons of a restaurant in Ithaca, New York and it indicated that they generally would be willing to shift their dining time to off-peak hours in exchange for discounts on menu items. Better than three-quarters of the 367 respondents agreed that they would accept an incentive for dining at an off-peak time.

Danny (2005) [35] conducted a study to investigate web-shopping behaviour in Hong Kong. The purpose was the identification of the general attitude towards web-shopping; relationships between past web-shopping experience, attitude towards web-shopping, adoption decisions, search behaviour and web-shopping intentions; and influences of promotional offers and product categories on web-shopping intentions. Relevant hypotheses were constructed and a web-based questionnaire survey was then conducted using technically educated subjects. The presence of promotional offers had a positive effect on web-shopping intentions, and web-shopping intentions were different for different product categories.

B. Impulse and habitual purchasing

In the emerging business scenario various promotional techniques are used by the marketer for influencing the purchase decision of their consumers. Sales promotion, a key element of promotional mix has been widely used to sustain competitive advantage, increase sales and stimulate consumer purchase decision, is becoming a valuable tool for marketers to influence purchase decision.

Pandey, Pandey and Henry (2013) [36] showed that sales promotions could have several impacts on buyer behaviour, one of these includes impulse purchasing which is a sense of urgency to purchase a brand, and ignore alternatives. Through this study, an effort had been made to find out the various sales promotion tools and its impact on purchase decision towards white good (refrigerator). For conducting the research, data was collected through convenience sampling of 109 respondents through descriptive research design technique. Later the data was analysed and the hypothesis was tested by using multiple regression technique. The result showed that among the various sales promotion tools: offer, premium and contest are the most influencing variables for consumer purchase decision.

However, it has been critiqued by another study. Aydinli, Bertini, and Lambrecht (2014) [37] depicted that sales promotions dicentivises the decision making process. Their research has found that price promotions could cause habitual purchasing, where there is minimal mental effort in the decision making process, especially for low involvement products. Habitual purchasing is prevalent for mature brands, therefore for new brands entering the market, this behaviour could initially be obstructed through the aspect of affect, also known as evoked feelings which could be used as a significant factor in the design of sales promotions.

Nonetheless, habitual purchasing could also be used effectivley as a marketing objective, for example, a case study on The Sun newspaper stated how the brand aimed to influence consumer behaviour, through creating a new habit of purchasing their newspaper (WARC, 2012). This was successfully accomplished through a personalised cereal box, including coupons sent to existing consumers (WARC, 2012) [38]. This resulted in 68,822 of 210,000 vouchers being redeemed and influenced 58% of 250 consumers surveyed, to purchase the newspaper two or three times more a week

(WARC, 2012). This is an example of how sales promotions could initially influence purchases, and as a result create habitual purchasing.

Flipkart, Amazon & Snapdeal have evolved with a trend to launch flash sales India prior to the major Hindu festival i.e. Diwali. Flipkart with its Big Billion Day, Amazon with its Great India Sale & Snapdeal with its Unbox Diwali Sale have been the most prominent flash sales in India from past many years. The flash sales websites of businesses have grown exponentially since 2009, with a 368% increase in monthly market share. Also half of the purchases occur during the first half hour of the flash sales [39]. The more successful flash sales are those that don't last very long and 50% of purchases occur during the first hour of a flash sale. Some of the most important tools used by e-retail platforms for heavy promotions during festive flash sale seasons include:

Discounted products: More discounted products than normal days. The discount is attractive for the customer. **Free Shipping/Free Returns:** Incorporating shipping cost into the product generates a security inside customer that he won't lose out anything if he had to return the product. Walker Sands Info graphic reports that 80% of the online consumers would be more tempted to go for Amazon, if offered free shipping; next day delivery would attract 66% more customers.

Extra Cash back with Bank tie ups: Amazon, Flipkart, Snapdeal during flash sales attract more consumers by providing extra discount apart from the running discount during flash sales, by getting attached to major banks of India like SBI, HDFC, Axis, wherein they offer extra discount of 10-20% on purchase of minimum amount of products.

Different day for different category of products: Assigning separate day for major categories which include Fashion, Home & Appliances, Mobile & Mobile Accessories, Electronics & Automotive and Books & More helps the consumer shop easily on that assigned day, leading to more purchases. This pattern has been followed by all three major e-tail platforms Flipkart, Amazon & Snapdeal [40]. The concept of flash sales has been analysed in various industries in the form of prior studies done in those fields. Prior research done in case of flash sales among various industries indicates that customers act in a positive manner towards a price promotion because it is able to generate positive feeling among them. Consumers are able to explore new

products, wherein they tend to exhibit a favourable attitude towards price due to their perceived monetary savings reducing effort in purchase decisions and increase value perceptions.

Flash sales in Tourism has been done by (Dev and Falk, 2011) [41] where they studied the benefits of such promotions; and Sigala (2013) [42] study aimed to fill the gap by developing a holistic framework demonstrating how tourism firms can effectively design and implement online coupons. To achieve that, the article reviewed and also expanded the previous literature on coupon promotion in order to consider the new characteristics and capabilities of online coupons; the implications of the latter on online coupon delivery and management practices; and customer behaviour towards the online coupons and the firm. The framework is developed under two dimensions: (a) it identifies the stages of customer behaviour that need to be materialized for achieving the benefits of online coupons as well as it proposes metrics for measuring the achievement of the aims of these stages; and (b) it identifies the various factors that may influence the customer behaviour towards the online coupons and the firm at each of these stages. The implications of the proposed framework are also discussed. In their study tried to analyse how to maximize the benefits of using online coupons.

Kannan; Hu; Narasimhan (2015) [43] have studied the impact of social media activities on sales. The paper emphasized on how flash sale promotions increase average daily sales on the designer's primary website by up to 0.8 units in the first week after a flash sale is launched.

Khanna; Sampat, (2014) [44] have tried to understand the positive and negative factors influencing the online shopping in India during the festive season. The study examined the growth and opportunities in the Indian e-tailing sector by focusing on the current and future wave of the two big giant e- tailers in India, namely Flipkart and Amazon.in.

Agarwal; Sareen,2015 [45] in their study depicted how flash sales help in attracting customers to visit the web site and encourage them to buy products based on the deals and services offered. Studies on flash sales have been conducted in various industry verticals but very few studies have been conducted on understanding the impact of Flash sales with respect to sales, revenues, website traffic and logistics etc. of Indian Ecommerce industry. Hence the objective of the paper was to understand the impact of flash sales as a sales promotion tool on revenues, sales, traffic and logistics of 3

major Ecommerce platforms of India i.e. Flipkart, Amazon and Snapdeal. The study also focussed on the role played by sales promotion done in case of flash sales in attracting customers and generating sales on Website/ App.

The purpose of this research is aimed to explore the role of online shopping festival in driving the shopping explosion from consumer's perspective.

CHAPTER IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Statistical Model

In the light of the research question and study objectives, following theoretical model has been developed. This model shows the impact of sales promotion tools on consumer buying behaviour.

Research Design: The primary data is collected for this research and assemble by distributing the questionnaire among different people online and manually. In the questionnaires, some of the questions were the likert scale type and some were like check list questions to analyze the importance of the factors of buying.

Research Sample: Three hundred questionnaires were distributed through online via face book, email and manually to fill in the questionnaire on voluntary basis. As a result, out of 300, 265 questionnaires were found valid for the study.

Statistical technique: The collected data will undergo suitable statistical techniques using EXCEL and SPSS (statistical package for social science) to reach the conclusion.

Therefore following hypotheses have been created to answer study research question.

H1: There is a no positive relationship between consumer's buying behaviour and promotional activities.

H2: There is a positive relationship between consumer's buying behaviour and promotional activities.

Regression Analysis:

Table 1.1 ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.515	1	.515	3.892	.050 ^b
	Residual	34.828	263	.132		
	Total	35.343	264			
a. Dependent Variable: Have you ever done impulse buying?						
b. Predictors: (Constant), When I see a good promotional scheme there, I tend to buy more than what I intended to buy.						

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.055	.057		18.540	.000
	When I see a good promotional scheme there, I tend to buy more than what I intended to buy.	.040	.020	.121	1.973	.050

a. Dependent Variable: Have you ever done impulse buying?

Analyses: The value of beta of shopping environment is positive which 0.040. It inspected that there is a positive relationship between promotional activities and buying behaviour.

B. Theoretical model

A detailed secondary research was conducted from different newspaper articles, magazines, research papers, reports and journals from year 2010 to 2018. By studying flash sales of 3 major online retailers viz Flipkart, Snapdeal and Amazon, from year 2010 to 2018, the study tried to analyse the impact of Flash sales on E commerce companies with respect to sales, revenues, website traffic and logistics. Below are hypotheses and proofs of the analysis on various factors that the E- commerce industry should consider while strategizing flash sales.

Hypothesis 1: Flash sales help to increase the revenues for Ecommerce companies

For e-commerce companies, the festive month of Diwali in case of flash sales accounts for 30-40% of a complete year's sale. According to E-commerce division of Google India, the Diwali sale results in 2.5 to 3 times increase in revenue each year. Online retail revenue in India's top seven cities is likely to grow more than 10 times from \$1.2 billion in 2014 to \$14 billion in 2019. [77]

Analysis: Below is the analysis done for revenue parameter for the big three E-commerce companies in India.

- **Amazon:** Amazon made rapid growth in just 3 years of its launch because of festive sales.

In 2014, Amazon saw a growth in multiples of the year's festival season, as it added 40,000 products a day [46]. Sellers saw 8-10 times growth in 2014 Diwali compared to that of 2013 with the one crore club-sellers making more than ₹1 crore of sales from 2014. Diwali sale- grew more than eight times and the 10 crore club grew more than 11 times.

In 2015, over 65% orders that were placed during Diwali sales came from tier II and tier III cities and towns from numerous category of available products during that sale [30,47]. Also there was a 400% increase in the number of new buyers to www.amazon.in, than on daily basis. Majority of new buyers were from tier II and tier III geographies of India [48]. Also during 2015 Diwali sale 70% of the orders coming through mobiles. [46]. According to the Registrar of Companies, Amazon Seller Services registered a six- fold increase in sales to Rs 1022 crores in 2014-15 from Rs 169 crores a year earlier. [49]

In 2016, Amazon sold 15 million units in the 5 days of its Great Indian Festival. [50] 80% of the traffic on Amazon during the flash sale was from mobile devices such as phones and tablets and unit orders grew by 7 times over last year's sale of 2015 [44]. It also posted 5times growth in customer acquisition, with 70 percent of new customers coming from tier II and tier III geographies [51]. It also has claimed to have sold 1 lakh product units in first 30 minutes [46].

In 2017, Amazon India claimed that it had grabbed a 44% share of total customers and shopping volumes, which was higher than any of its competitors [52]. The Amazon Shopping app continues to remain as the most downloaded shopping app in the country. Amazon sees 2X growth in customers from Tier 2, 3 and below geographies. The company also acquired new customers from areas like Tinsukia, Banka, Purnia and Karbi Anglong [53].

In 2018, Amazon had pumped in ₹2,700 crore (nearly \$386 million) into its Indian business, bringing its total investment in India to at least \$4 billion till date [54].

Table 1.3 Amazon-The Great Indian Sale

Year	Revenue	Name Of The Flash Sale
2010- 2012	Not Present In India	Not Launched
2013- 2014	Rs.169 crores	The Great Diwali Sale
2014- 2015	Rs.1022 crores	Diwali Dhamka Week
2015- 2016	Rs.2275 crores	Great Indian Diwali Sale
2016-2017	Rs. 2600 crores	Great Indian Festival
2017- 2018	Rs. 2700 crores	Great Indian Diwali sale

- **Flipkart:** Flipkart became the top charter of Indian e-tail after launching Big Billion Day

In 2014, after a great hype of the Big Billion Day for the first time, Flipkart managed to increase its sales on October 6, 2014. Flipkart managed to earn around Rs. 600 crores just from the maiden launch of Big Billion Days sale in 2014. [55]

Table 1.4 Flipkart-The Big Billion Days

Year	Revenue	Name Of The Flash Sale
2010- 2011	50 Crores	Not Launched
2011- 2012	500 Crores	Diwali Sale
2012-2013	2000 Crores	Diwali Sale
2013- 2014	2846 Crores	Big Billion Days
2014- 2015	10,309 Crores	Big Billion Days
2015- 2016	15,129 Crores (43%)	Big Billion Days
2016- 2017	10380 crores	Big Billion Days
2017- 2018	11764 Crores	Big Billion Days

In 2015, the firm said goods worth \$300 million (Rs.2000 crore) were sold during the five-day sale from October 13 to October 17, 2015 reported by Economic times. [56]

In its 2-6 October Big Billion Days of 2016, Flipkart sold 15.5 million units and ranked in sales of about Rs 3,000crores [49]. Flipkart grew 135%, on average, year-over-year in every quarter of 2016 [57]. The first five minutes of the Big Billion Days sale of 2016 saw highest number of concurrent users on the website, indicating that the consumers were greatly enthused and were waiting for the sale, to corner the best deals on offer [58]. Flipkart also stated that there was 10x more than the response on any other normal day. Also, according to the e-retailer, this was the highest ever in Flipkart's history [59].

In 2017, In its five-day Big Billion Days sale that ended on Sunday, Flipkart generated gross sales driven by booming sales of Apple Inc.'s iPhones, Xiaomi phones and VU televisions, according to two people familiar with the matter. Flipkart's numbers include sales at Myntra and Jabong, its specialty online fashion retail businesses.[60]

In 2018, Flipkart said that the company sold 1 million mobile phones in an hour and crossed 3 million in a day, making it the highest number of smartphones sold in a day by a single retailer in India. The director claimed that the Flipkart app has one million users on it at any given point during the sale.[61]

- **Snapdeal:** Diwali sales played a major factor in multiplying revenue of Snapdeal from 2013 onwards

In 2014, Diwali sales of Snapdeal were called as 'Snapdeal Diwali Bumper Sale'. The company is promised over 100 offers every hour across 500+ categories that year. The online retailer in 2014 offered special discounts on electronic items, including a buy 1 get 1 free promotion. [62]

In 2015, 'Unbox Zindagi' was 1st launched by Snapdeal. Snapdeal revenues during the period (2015-2016) saw a drastic increase that year i.e. the revenues jumped over 400% to Rs. crore from Rs 168.16 crore, largely by the launch of seasonal flash sales that year [63]. In FY15, Indian e-commerce players were engaging in a fierce online battle with each other in all perspectives, offering competitive discounts on flash sales. [53]. According to Snapdeal it sold products worth \$100 million on the single day of Monday electronic sale, that took place on 12th October 2015 a day before the Diwali sale was to start. [64].

In 2016, Snapdeal’s sales volume grew by nine folds during the Unbox Diwali discount offer, with 37 sellers on its platform crossing Rs. 1-crore turnover mark each, on the first day itself of the sale [65]. Sales volumes surged nearly 9x of average daily sales. Snapdeal witnessed more than 80 per cent of orders coming from its mobile platforms [66]. Snapdeal’s Unbox Diwali Sale in 2016 saw 40 percent more women shopping online as compared to the previous year. Over 50 percent of orders were prepaid in the sale. More than 75,000 sellers received multiple orders during the sale and traffic from tier II and III cities went up 20 times over the previous year [67].

Table 1.5 Snapdeal Unbox Zindagi

Year	Revenue	Flash Sales
2010-2011	NA	Not Launched
2011-2012	Rs. 150 crores	Not Launched
2012-2013	Rs 600 crores	Not Launched
2013-2014	Rs. 168.29 crores	Diwali Bumper Sale
2015-2016	Rs 937.69 crores	Unbox Zindagi
2016-17	Rs 901 crore	Diwali sale
2017-18	Rs. 230 crore	Diwali sale

Conclusion

Thus, based on the data above, if we analyse the revenues of the 3 ecommerce companies for past 4/5 years, it can be inferred that flash sales make a positive impact in generating heavy revenues for these web portals during flash sales. We can see that the revenues for Amazon have increased from Rs169 crores in 2013-14 to Rs 2700 crores in 2017-18. (Refer Table 1.3).The revenue for Flipkart has increased from Rs.500 crores in 2011- 12 to Rs.11764 crores in 2017-18 (Refer Table 1.4). The revenue for Snapdeal has increased from Rs 150 crores in 2011- 12 to Rs 230 crore in 2017-18 (Refer Table 1.5). Hence the Hypotheses 1 gets proven which states that Flash sales help to increase the revenues for Ecommerce companies.

Hypothesis 2: Flash sales causes high traffic loads and leads to website slowdown

Analysis: When a Flash sale is announced people wait for the day of sale to avail the offers on variety of product. To get the offers first -a huge load of customers hit the website and browse for better and better deals. Due to this, load is generated on website – which cannot handle the pressure to manage multiple user requests at a time. This causes the website and App to shut down for specific period until the website gets up and running fine.

- **Flipkart**

Web-site slow down and even crash is seen on a major e- commerce websites during flash sales. When the website is down or crashed - the sales are ‘zero’ and no revenue is generated for that specific time.

In 2014, the site of Flipkart got crumbled due to increased load throwing random errors. Huge numbers of buyers were not getting order confirmation after making payments and some were even not able to see items they added to their shopping cart. The consumers shared their grievances on social networking website, Twitter, Facebook. [68]

In 2015, nearly 1.5 million customers ended up buying from Flipkart. [69] This lead to stocks run out quickly, cancellations went high, website could not take the traffic and the ware house got cluttered.

Flipkart website reportedly crashed at midnight during the sale of the Xiaomi Redmi Note 4 in 2017. This brings back memories of the first time when Xiaomi had entered India with its Mi 3 and had hosted the flash sale on Flipkart.

In 2017, Flipkart was down for a whole 45 minutes before it was up and running again. Flipkart had sales of \$4 billion previous year, and a 45 minute period with no sales could mean a loss in sales that’s upwards of Rs. 4 crore, assuming sales are distributed throughout the day and night. A 45 minute downtime during peak hours could cause a loss in sales that’s much higher. [70]

- **For Amazon**

In 2014, Amazon India website crashed as soon as the sale opened at 7 am. The visitors, who were expecting a better deal, were treated to poor deals, thus creating a bad experience for the consumer. [71]

In 2015, Amazon experienced site crash when 3 lakh of its registered users tried to buy the version of Xaomi phones online. Due to heavy traffic the website experienced failures, such that customers reacted on social media site.

In 2018, many customers shopping for deals on Amazon.com —also known as Amazon Prime Day—reported the company’s website as down. Instead of finding the best Amazon Prime Day deals, customers were being served up images of the “dogs of Amazon,” which appears when amazon.com is down, along with a notice saying “sorry, something went wrong on our end.[72]

- **For Snapdeal**

In 2014, Snapdeal’s payment checkout page did not work. The mess-up evoked the ire of hundreds of online shoppers, who took to social media to accuse the e-tailor of cheating them in the name of a 'big sale' [73]

Over the traffic on all 3 websites was as follows in 2016 flash respective flash sales.

Table 1.6 Traffic Analysis

	Flipkart	Amazon.in	Snapdeal
Traffic	56%	29%	15%
Daily visits	9.1 mn	12.8mn	3.7mn
Avg. visit duration	9min	9.4min	7min
Pages per visit	10	13	6

Thus the more the customers coming in, the more traffic is generated and causes the website to slowdown.

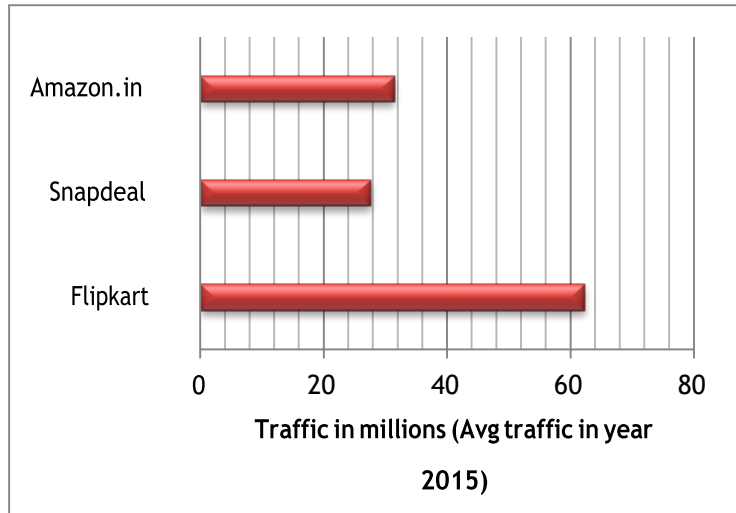


Fig 1: Average traffic analysis

Conclusion

From the above analysis, we can see that the year on year the consumers' base going online to buy products is increasing. This consumer penetration can be easily tracked by the mobile and internet penetration in India. As the number the users using the website and app increases the load on the website increases and thus causes the website malfunction and leads to website crash. Hence the Hypotheses 2 is proven which states that Flash sales causes high traffic loads and leads to website slowdown.

Hypothesis 3: Discount strategies lead to more sales of products

Analysis: Flash sales come up with huge discounts on products and these discounts are time bound. There are deals on products with discount up from 15% to 20% via Citibank, Axis Bank and other banks. Flash sale deals for purchasing a wide range of product from several categories. App Only Deals, Best Deals, Big Billion Day Deals, Short Time Deals, bumper bonanza, a super-deal season are available for consumers. Deals to cost-conscious consumers are provided, usually over a period of five-day event to fend off competition by different E-retail platforms.

The total products sold from a particular e-commerce websites given in GMV (Gross Merchandise Value). Below is the analysis for the top three firms how discounts have led to more sales:

- **For Flipkart-**

In 2018, Flipkart has used time based ‘Your Wish, Our Offer’, which was coupled with a list of products a customer’s wished to buy. Flipkart came up an idea ‘Buy now pay later’ which helped customers do all the festive shopping now and play the bills on a later date. The most innovative idea introduced by Flipkart was Re 1 flash sale on the most expensive products, which saw more customer traffic than usual and customers willing to buy more from the website. [74]

The result of these past discount strategies, combined together, reflected the GMV is expected to grow at CAGR of 50% to 60% by 2020.

- **For Amazon.in-**

In 2018, Amazon came up with ‘Curtain Raiser Deals’, where users can choose between two groups of products - the one with the most votes will go on sale for more time such that more customers would buy the same. Amazon provided a platform to introduce new phones such as Motorola MotoE, Xaomi’s newer phones on discounted prices. Amazon came up with new add strategy ‘AurDikhao, AurDikhao’ (show me more products) which had discount priced offers in the newer products. [75]

The result of these past discount strategies reflected in total GMV of 15.5 million units sold during flash sales of 2016, which was highest from all past year sales.

- **For Snapdeal-**

In 2018, Snapdeal came up with strategies to win customers with contests introduced such as ‘Vote and Win’, ‘Wish and Win’ and ‘Unbox Zindagi’. This was done over a period of time during the Flash sales so that more customers would visit site and buy their products. Other offers given were ‘Deal of the Day’, ‘Promo Code’ offers, ‘End of Season sale’ to attract customers. The GMV for Snapdeal jumped to a whopping 301% in August 2015.

Conclusion:

Based on the above analysis, we can infer that discounts were the major reason why consumers buy online or offline. Also as mentioned in the analysis, the GMV figures for all the 3 companies show huge amount of increase. Hence the hypothesis 3 which states that Discount strategies lead to more sales of products stands proven.

Hypothesis 4: Flash sales leads to drastic increase in logistics support

Analysis: Logistics during the flash sales need to be FAST- from start to finish. This is targeted to from the 3-layer approach for logistics i.e. Fast picking, Fast packaging and Fast Shipping. A strategy developed by many companies is delivering directly from truck to customer premises instead of keeping it in inventory. This helps in faster delivery of products than the estimated time. Due to vast Indian geography and taxes and tolls the issue of delivering products on right time becomes issue, so companies tie up with logistics support and courier services.

- **For Flipkart-**

Flipkart hired 10,000 temp staff for Big Billion Days sale. It extended its arm to e-Flash for faster delivery of products [76]. Flipkart's logistics partner -Ekart had decided to spend more than USD 2.5 billion on warehouse and logistics Cash on delivery (COD), Fulfilment processed model are one of the kind started by Flipkart for faster delivery from its shipping centre. The increase in logistics has even covered tier II and tier III cities, which is depicted in the annual revenue. Thus, the load on logistics has increased but this has added hugely to the company's profits.

- **For Amazon**

Amazon has started with Amazon Transport Services (ATS) Private Limited. Amazon has 23 fulfilment centres and the largest storage space among e-commerce firms, but the company uses its logistics to carry out orders booked only on its flagship outlets unlike some of the other players. Amazon has one day and two-day delivery in more than 100 prime cities. [77]

- **For Snapdeal-**

Snapdeal witnessed a nine-fold increase in traffic with 37 major sellers crossing more than Rs 1 Cr turnover. The more volume increase was seen in 2tier and 3tier cities. Other major deals from where most of the shipment was carried out was Mizoram, Meghalaya, Goa, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir [78]

Conclusion for hypothesis: From the above analysis we can see that the logistics support has increased drastically during flash sales. Hence the hypotheses 4 which states that Flash sales leads to drastic increase in logistics support stands proven.

CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Overall, sales promotion tools are playing an important role to stimulate customers towards buying any promoted product, and that will definitely increase dealers and retailers profit and market share. In this study it showed that consumers' behavior can be positively induced by using various promotion tools such as; price discount, and buy one get one free, on the other hand, it found that promotion tools such as coupon have no influence on consumer buying behaviors.

The study also provides the analysis of Festive Flash sales for Flipkart, Amazon and Snapdeal over a past few years. The companies in this ecommerce scrum think as: "Flash sales and discounts are an important aspect of sustaining and expanding business for ecommerce players. "These deals and sales help in acquiring new customers and retain the existing ones. Indian customers love deals and discounts.

As the battle for India's ecommerce industry intensifies, companies in this space are digging in for the long haul. While customer acquisition is a key battleground (acquiring each one can cost Rs 250-1,500 depending on a host of variables), venture-funded ecommerce firms seem to be willing to fork out a small fortune to snare these customers. A big sale is the easiest way to attract surfers to their site.

The study and the analysis indicate that flash sales help e-retail industries to increase their revenues multifold, each year. Also flash sales help highly competitive e-retail platforms to survive in the growing industry of online shopping. With the launch of flash sale each year these e-retail platforms are seeing rise in their website /app traffic which sometimes leads to slowdown of their services on the day of flash sales. Clearly, many of these sales were promoted with much pomp in the days and weeks preceding the event, but come D-Day many of the plans came unstuck. Sites crashed, products couldn't be purchased and those who struggled through the online quagmire often found deliveries delayed or worse the wrong goods at their doorstep.

The backbone that these e-commerce platforms use to survive during festive sales is heavy discount on products which in turn leads to high number of sales recorded each year. Also with increase in revenue each year, flash sales are also demanding these

online portals to increase their logistics support for better delivery services and supply chain management.

These flash sales are also very important for the management of these online portals. Managers need to set their goals realistic, keep the sale simple, choose a right date and time for it. Buying patterns from last year records should be analysed by the management, so that the next sale gives more products that are customer centric. Active monitoring of each day sale should be done and better engagement with the customers should take place, as flash sales is the major way to increase revenue multi folds for these online e-retailers.

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