

Enhancing Consumer Engagement in Indian E-commerce Via Promotion Strategies



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In recent years, Indian consumer behavior has significantly evolved, largely due to the rise of e-commerce driven by broader internet access and smartphone use. In this competitive space, companies utilize various promotional strategies like discounts, coupons, and free services to attract customers, particularly in the large appliance segment. This paper investigates consumer perceptions of online sales promotions for consumer durables, based on a survey of 467 participants. Identifying five key attitudes—cost savings, quality, convenience, status, and variety—this study contributes to knowledge by recommending that e-commerce platforms focus on these factors to enhance customer engagement and loyalty.

Keywords: E-Commerce, Online Sales Promotion, Consumer Durables, Online Consumers, Consumer Perception

1. Introduction

The core aim of any business is to increase sales of its products or services (Ofoegbu & Udom, 2013). Methods such as advertising, direct sales, and affiliate marketing serve this purpose, with sales promotion being one of the most researched strategies. Short-term promotions can attract new customers and grow market share (Liu et al., 2011), though misuse may harm profitability (Ofoegbu & Udom, 2013; Pauwels et al., 2002). Rising competition in retail pushes marketers to position their brands among market leaders (Marais et al., 2014). With an emphasis on cost efficiency, customer acquisition and retention are essential, as acquiring new customers generally incurs higher costs than retaining existing ones (Khamitov et al., 2019). In the modern retail environment, effectively communicating with consumers is key to showcasing product offerings, making the marketing mix—particularly sales promotion—an indispensable tool (Majid & Laroche, 2019). Sales promotion strategies are designed to inform, persuade, and motivate purchasing decisions (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017). Marketers aim to create compelling promotions that capture consumer attention, stimulating buying intent (Nagar, 2009; Rao, 2009). Selecting the most effective promotion type for the target audience is vital in influencing consumer behavior (Jee, 2021). Consumers are often drawn to promotions by the promise of financial savings, which provides utilitarian benefits (Amara & Kchaou, 2014), as well as hedonic benefits like emotional satisfaction and symbolic meaning (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Understanding consumer perceptions of sales promotions and their perceived benefits is essential to maximize effectiveness (Chandon et al., 2000). This study examines consumer attitudes toward online sales promotions for large appliances offered by Indian e-commerce platforms. By identifying factors valued by consumers, the research seeks to guide e-commerce firms in crafting marketing campaigns that align with consumer preferences.

2. Literature Review

Sales promotion, a vital element of the promotional mix, significantly influences consumer behavior through monetary strategies like discounts and non-monetary incentives such as contests, driving immediate sales and fostering engagement. It expands customer bases, enhances retention, and supports brand loyalty, especially when tailored to individual preferences, leveraging both utilitarian benefits (e.g., savings, convenience) and hedonic benefits (e.g., enjoyment, emotional appeal). By aligning promotional strategies with consumer motives and considering contextual factors like CSR and store environment, marketers can boost consumer trust, purchase intentions, and overall satisfaction in both physical and online retail settings. Integrating sales promotion strategies with broader marketing and environmental factors can enable businesses to create more impactful campaigns that resonate with consumer preferences, fostering both immediate and sustained engagement.

2.1 Sales Promotion

Sales promotion, a key component of the promotional mix, plays a significant role in influencing consumer behavior and purchase decisions. In modern marketing, businesses utilize diverse techniques to attract attention and drive immediate sales (Shimp, 2010). These techniques can be broadly categorized into monetary promotions, such as discounts and price reductions, and non-monetary promotions, including gifts and contests, which encourage trials, enhance brand visibility, and stimulate purchase intentions (Farrag, 2017; Carpenter & Moore, 2008). Sales promotions are employed to generate quick responses from consumers, addressing objectives like boosting store traffic, improving price perception, enhancing brand image, and managing inventory (Blattberg & Neslin, 1990). In online retail, sales promotions foster engagement, often triggering impulsive buying driven by hedonic benefits like enjoyment and experience or utilitarian benefits like savings and

convenience (Chandon et al., 2000). By strategically emphasizing these benefits, marketers can effectively strengthen consumer loyalty and increase purchase frequency.

2.2 Sales Promotion and Consumer Engagement

Sales promotions have proven effective in expanding customer bases and retaining existing customers. For instance, the increasing use of digital coupons highlights their impact on customer acquisition (Forrester, 2014). Online platforms leverage personalized promotions, targeting individual preferences to foster impulsive buying behaviors (Kannan & Kopalle, 2001). Discounts and promotional ideas effectively enhance purchase intentions, particularly when consumers are presented with time-sensitive deals (Liao et al., 2009; Palazon & Ballester, 2011). Sales Promotion also play a vital role in the marketing mix, complementing advertising and direct sales to build brand loyalty and drive revenue. Price-sensitive consumers often seek out promotions as incentives, making well-planned campaigns essential for competitive advantage (Cui et al., 2016; Yeshin, 2006).

2.3 Monetary vs. Non-Monetary Sales Promotions

Monetary promotions, such as price cuts and coupon discounts, appeal to consumers by offering tangible savings and convenience (Chandon et al., 2000). These are particularly effective for task-oriented consumers and premium brands, as they align with rational purchase motivations (Kwok & Uncles, 2005; Antunes et al., 2022). Conversely, non-monetary promotions, like bonuses or sweepstakes, enhance perceived brand value without eroding equity (Mela et al., 1997). These are more impactful for long-term branding, benefiting both utilitarian and hedonic products by providing entertainment and value expression (Yi & Yoo, 2011).

2.4 Benefits of Sales Promotions

Sales promotions provide dual benefits—utilitarian and hedonic—that shape consumer perceptions and behavior. Utilitarian benefits address functional and economic needs, offering savings, convenience, and quality assurance (Esfahani & Jafarzadeh, 2012). Hedonic benefits, on the other hand, focus on emotional satisfaction, sensory appeal, and symbolic meaning, making purchases more enjoyable and rewarding (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Both benefits significantly influence purchase intentions and loyalty (Chiu et al., 2014; Santini et al., 2016).

2.5 Consumer Behavior and Decision-Making

Consumer purchase decisions are shaped by a blend of utilitarian and hedonic motives. While practical consumption aims to fulfill functional needs, hedonic consumption centers on emotional gratification and sensory experiences (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). Effective sales promotions align with these motives, offering both practical value and enjoyable experiences to engage a diverse consumer base (Chandon et al., 2000). The decision-making process involves several stages, from recognizing a need to evaluating alternatives and making a final choice. Marketers can influence these phases by providing relevant information and addressing perceived risks, ultimately enhancing consumer confidence in purchase decisions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007; Blackwell et al., 2001). Beyond individual tactics, contextual factors like corporate social responsibility (CSR) and store environment also influence consumer responses to promotions. CSR initiatives and a positive shopping atmosphere enhance trust and reinforce purchase decisions, while overly aggressive promotions may have the opposite effect (Hanaysha, 2018). In online retail, improved website quality and tailored promotional strategies can increase impulse purchases and drive customer satisfaction (Akram et al., 2018).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Organization

A structured questionnaire survey was conducted to assess customer attitudes toward online sales promotions implemented by e-commerce companies in India. Data was collected from 467 respondents using a self-developed questionnaire, out of which 421 valid responses were retained for analysis. The survey was divided into two sections: one addressing perceptions of sales promotions and the other capturing socio-demographic details. The sales promotion section featured 17 statements rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with 3 representing a neutral position. Convenience sampling was employed, and the survey design incorporated elements adapted from established frameworks, including Chandon et al. (2000), Childers et al. (2001), Garretson & Burton (2003), Ivanova (2012), Buil (2013), Pilelienė & Bakanauskas (2015), and Zhi-Kang & Ogawa (2017). Data collection was conducted via Google Forms between January and June 2023, and subsequent analysis utilized robust statistical tools.

3.2 Reliability and Data Suitability

The reliability of the dataset was verified through Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a value of 0.887, which surpasses the recommended threshold of 0.7, indicating high internal consistency (Table 1).

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

S. No	Reliability Method	Calculated Value
1	Cronbach's Alpha	.887

Source: Authors' Own

Additionally, the data's suitability for factor analysis was confirmed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. A KMO value of 0.833 and a significant Bartlett's test result ($p < 0.01$) validate the sample adequacy and reject the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix (Table 2).

Table 2 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.833
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3638.563
	df	136
	Sig.	.000

Source: Authors' Own

With reliability and adequacy established, the dataset was deemed appropriate for factor analysis to explore underlying patterns in consumer attitudes.

4. Results and Discussions

This study investigates consumer perceptions of online sales promotions, a critical area for e-commerce firms in India to focus on to drive sales growth through their platforms. The research specifically examines consumer attitudes toward promotions for durable goods, including large appliances such as refrigerators, washing machines, air conditioners, and dishwashers. To comprehensively analyze these attitudes, fundamental statements capturing the essence of online sales promotions were evaluated and subjected to factor analysis. Using initial Eigenvalues, the factor analysis identified the proportion of variance explained by each factor. Factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1, as per Kaiser's criterion, were retained for further examination. Post-rotation, the analysis revealed five distinct factors as depicted in Table 3, explaining 73.687% of the total variance. Factor 1 accounted for 20.149% of the variance, Factor 2 for 16.824%, Factor 3 for 13.519%, Factor 4 for 12.210%, and Factor 5 for 10.984%. The rotation process refined the factor structure, providing a clearer understanding of the underlying dimensions of consumer attitudes toward online sales promotions.

Table 3 Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.340	31.413	31.413	3.425	20.149	20.149
2	2.522	14.833	46.246	2.860	16.824	36.973
3	2.173	12.781	59.027	2.298	13.519	50.493
4	1.485	8.738	67.764	2.076	12.210	62.703
5	1.007	5.922	73.687	1.867	10.984	73.687
6	.568	3.341	77.028			
7	.554	3.259	80.286			
8	.496	2.916	83.203			
9	.451	2.653	85.855			
10	.443	2.606	88.461			
11	.395	2.323	90.785			
12	.332	1.954	92.739			
13	.301	1.772	94.510			
14	.288	1.692	96.202			
15	.260	1.529	97.731			
16	.216	1.272	99.003			
17	.170	.997	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Source: Authors' Own

Table 4 presents the communalities, indicating the proportion of variance in each component that is explained by the five identified factors. Communalities represent the extent to which a variable's variance is associated with the shared underlying factors. For a component to be considered sufficiently informative, its communality value should exceed 0.2. As shown in the table, all components meet this criterion, confirming their relevance and contribution to the factor structure.

The findings of the study enabled the classification of 17 components reflecting consumer attitudes toward online sales promotions into five distinct factors, collectively accounting for approximately 74% of the total variance. Table 5 demonstrates how these components are grouped into factors through the Rotated Component Matrix, utilizing the Varimax rotation technique with Kaiser normalization to optimize the factor structure.

Table 4 Communalities

Component	Extraction
Availing online sales promotion offers for consumer durable, gives me the impression of being a smart shopper	.777
With online sales promotion offers, I can remember what consumer durable products I need	.784
Online sales promotional offers for consumer durables relaxes the budget constraints on my family's spending	.737
I sense that I get good deals during consumer durable purchases made using online sales promotional offers	.798
During online sales promotion, I can have consumer durable products with excellent features	.626
When I shop for consumer durables using online sales promotion, I pride myself as a winner	.766
I save time for choosing the right consumer durable product with the use of online sales promotion	.764
Using online sales promotion would be convenient for me for purchasing consumer durable products	.689
I can buy consumer durable products of consistent quality, by availing online sales promotion offers	.727
By using online sales promotion offers, I can upgrade to a better consumer durable brand	.749
I can afford a better-than-usual consumer durable product through online sales promotion offers	.755
Availing online sales promotion offers, helps me to really spend less while buying the consumer durable goods	.789
I really save money, while purchasing consumer durables during online sales promotion offers	.815
When I make wise decisions on purchase of consumer durables using online sales promotion offers, I feel genuine joy	.628
I am reminded of the consumer durable products, during online sales promotion offers	.722
During online sales promotion offers, I can purchase consumer durable goods that are not dealt with in physical stores	.727
During online sales promotion offers, I get excited for trying new consumer durable brands	.674
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis	

Source: Authors' own

Table 5 Rotated Component Matrix

Component	Factor	Dimension
I really save money, while purchasing consumer durables during online sales promotion offers	1	Savings
I sense that I get good deals during consumer durable purchases made using online sales promotional offers		
Availing online sales promotion offers, helps me to really spend less while buying the consumer durable goods		
Online sales promotional offers for consumer durables relaxes the budget constraints on my family's spending	2	Quality
I can afford a better-than-usual consumer durable product through online sales promotion offers		
By using online sales promotion offers, I can upgrade to a better consumer durable brand		
I can buy consumer durable products of consistent quality, by availing online sales promotion offers		
During online sales promotion, I can have consumer durable products with excellent features	3	Convenience
With online sales promotion offers, I can remember what consumer durable products I need		
I save time for choosing the right consumer durable product with the use of online sales promotion		
Using online sales promotion would be convenient for me for purchasing consumer durable products	4	Status
Availing online sales promotion offers for consumer durable, gives me the impression of being a smart shopper		
When I shop for consumer durables using online sales promotion, I pride myself as a winner	5	Variety
When I make wise decisions on purchase of consumer durables using online sales promotion offers, I feel genuine joy		
During online sales promotion offers, I can purchase consumer durable goods that are not dealt with in physical stores		
I am reminded of the consumer durable products, during online sales promotion offers		
During online sales promotion offers, I get excited for trying new consumer durable brands		

Source: Authors' Own

Table 5 highlights how each factor represents a unique dimension of consumer attitudes toward online sales promotions. These dimensions align with the benefits identified by Chandon et al. (2000), albeit with notable refinements. The factor analysis revealed that components linked to savings, quality, and convenience closely correspond to Chandon et al.'s findings, while status and variety emerged as revised dimensions, replacing the previously identified categories of value expression, exploration, and entertainment. Consequently, the results in Table 5 suggest that consumer attitudes toward online sales promotions can be effectively categorized into five key benefits: savings, quality, convenience, status, and variety.

5. Future Research Directions

This study highlights five key consumer benefit dimensions—savings, quality, convenience, status, and variety—that influence attitudes toward online sales promotions. Future research could delve deeper into these factors to assess their effects on consumer behavior, including comparative studies across different industries, longitudinal research to observe shifts in perceptions over time, and qualitative approaches to explore underlying consumer motivations. Investigating the role of contextual factors and evaluating managerial interventions could provide practical recommendations for e-commerce platforms to enhance their promotional effectiveness. Overall, further exploration in this domain has the potential to generate meaningful insights and deepen the understanding of consumer engagement with online promotions.

6. Conclusions

Sales promotion is widely regarded by businesses as an effective tool to attract customers and drive sales, often surpassing advertising and other forms of marketing communication in persuasiveness. To achieve optimal results, sales promotions

must be carefully designed to align with customer preferences. These promotions are typically categorized into price-based (monetary) and non-price-based (non-monetary) approaches, each shaping consumer perceptions in distinct ways. While debates persist about the relative effectiveness of these methods, it is essential for organizations to determine which type best resonates with their target audience. Understanding consumer attitudes toward sales promotions allows e-commerce companies to craft more targeted and impactful strategies. This study identified five key consumer attitudes—savings, quality, convenience, status, and variety—that influence responses to promotions. Accordingly, Indian e-commerce firms should emphasize monetary savings, dependable product quality, efficient purchasing processes, enjoyable shopping experiences, and diverse product offerings to effectively engage and retain customers.

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