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How Online Sales Promotions affect Consumer Choices: The Case of Amazon India

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the impact of online sales promotion strategies employed by Amazon India, a major online retailer in the country. The promotional tactics ex- plored included email marketing, eWOM, customer recommendations, product reviews, discounts, cashback offers, loyalty programs, and contests. Online shoppers often face difficulties in evaluating these promotions and making informed purchasing decisions. A quantitative research approach was adopted, utilizing a structured questionnaire with Likert-scale responses to gather data from online consumers. The research model was constructed and analyzed using the PLS-SEM method. The study identifies two critical constructs that shape consumer shopping experiences, offering key insights into the promotional strategies used by Amazon India.

JEL Categories: M31, D12, L81

Keywords: Sales Promotion, online shoppers, consumer behaviour, PLS-SEM, Amazon India

1 Introduction

The e-commerce industry has grown rapidly in recent years, with Amazon India being one of the leading players. While global e-commerce giants like Amazon India have established dominance in many markets, the Indian e-commerce landscape presents unique challenges and opportunities. In India, local players such as Flipkart,Snpadeal, Meesho and Reliance's JioMart omni channel have gained significant market share by tailoring their strategies to meet the specific needs of Indian consumers. The Indian e-commerce market also differs from global trends in its emphasis on cash-on-delivery options and the prevalence of mobile-first shopping experiences. This study investigates the influence of Amazon India's online sales promotions on consumer decision-making processes. As e-commerce continues to grow rapidly in India, understanding how promotional strategies affect consumer behavior has become increasingly important for businesses operating in this competitive digital marketplace. Amazon India, as one of the leading e-commerce platforms in the country, provides an ideal case study to examine the complex relationship between online sales promotions and consumer choices. The research aims to analyze customer shopping experience for various promotional events offered by Amazon India and seeks to uncover patterns in consumer preferences and purchasing habits. Additionally, the research has explored how different types of promotions, including discounts, cashback offers, and bundled deals, impact consumer decision-making. A comprehensive review of the literature on sales promotional tools and strategies used by online retailers, with a focus on Amazon India India and ecommerce platforms, was conducted to provide a theoretical framework for the study.

2 Literature Review

Online sales promotions significantly impact consumer behavior in India, particularly in e-commerce. Studies show that promotional tools like discounts, coupons, and loyalty programs positively influence purchasing decisions in the apparel

industry (Mishra et al., 2024). While sales promotions can induce brand switching, stock piling, and purchase acceleration, they may not contribute to category expansion in India (Mittal & Sethi, 2011). Factors such as promotional emails, SMS, discounts, and user-friendly interfaces play crucial roles in shaping online consumer behavior (Malik, angh). Interestingly, psychological and consciousness-related factors also influence customers' shopping experiences on platforms like Flipkart (Jamnani & Jamnani, 2024). E-commerce platforms provide significant discounts and promotions during festive seasons, boosting online shopping in India. This trend is driven by rising internet penetration, a growing number of internet-savvy consumers, and enhanced web accessibility. They organize sales events with distinctive names to attract shoppers during holiday seasons, impacting local communities and individual shoppers (Dolly Tripathi & Dr. Akshat Dubey, 2024).

Various promotional tools, including discounts, cashback, loyalty programs, and flash sales, are used to attract customers. However these strategies can have positive and negative effects on consumer behavior and brand loyalty (G. Malik, 2015). Factors such as increasing internet penetration, a growing number of internet-savvy consumers, and improved web accessibility have fueled this trend. E-commerce platforms organize sales events with distinctive names to attract shoppers during holiday seasons, impacting local communities and individual shoppers (Dolly Tripathi & Dr. Akshat Dubey, 2024).

Online Sales Promotion strategies are critical for e-commerce platforms to attract and retain customers (Zhang & Wedel, 2009; Jiang et al., 2015; Tandon, 2021). Literature indicates that online promotion strategies, such as targeted discounts and product recommendations, can significantly influence consumer purchasing decisions (Zhang & Wedel, 2009) (Jiang et al., 2015). Promotional activities that offer discounts or additional incentives can encourage customers to buy more, though there is a risk of the strategy backfiring if the discount is perceived as too low. Customized recommendations based on individual preferences can also boost sales of non-discounted items, offsetting the revenue loss from promotions (Jiang et al., 2015) (Zhang & Wedel, 2009).

Prior research has found that the effectiveness of various promotions depends on both cross-sectional differences in consumer preferences as well as temporal factors like the purchase cycle stage (Khan et al., 2009). For instance, loyalty programs tend to work better in online settings, while competitive promotions may be more effective offline. The incremental benefit of highly customized individual-level promotions over segment-level offers can also vary by product category and channel (Jiang et al., 2015) (Zhang & Wedel, 2009) (Khan et al., 2009).

Applying these insights, this study investigates the impact of Amazon India's promotion strategies on consumer behavior shopping experience.

3 Construct Development

3.1 Sales Promotion Strategies

Amazon India, a subsidiary of the global e-commerce giant Amazon India, launched in 2013 to cater to the rapidly growing Indian market. It functions as a marketplace providing an array of products from electronics to fashion, groceries, and home essentials. Amazon India has become one of the leading e-commerce platforms in the country, driven by its customer-centric approach, competitive pricing, and efficient logistics network. Some of its major sales promotion strategies include: -

Sales Promotion Strategy	Description
Discounts and Offers	Price reductions, flash sales, and events like Great Indian Festival and Prime Day with large discounts.
Coupons and Cashbacks	Digital coupons and cashback offer on purchases, with additional benefits for using Amazon India Pay.

Prime Membership Benefits	Exclusive access to early deals, faster deliveries, and special discounts for Amazon India Prime members.
Bundling and Product Combos	Offers savings on bundled products and combo deals to increase the average order value.
No-Cost EMI and Financing Options	Provides no-cost EMI and financing deals on expensive items like electronics and appliances.
Cashback and Referral Programs	Rewards customers through referral programs and cashback offers on purchases with partner banks' cards.

Source:- Extracted from https://www.Amazon India.in/

Amazon India's sales promotion strategies include discounts, coupons, cashback offers, exclusive Prime member benefits, etc. It also offers product bundling, no-cost EMI on expensive items, and rewards through referral programs and partner bank card cashbacks, all aimed at boosting customer purchases. These promotional strategies often include personalized recommendations, flash sales, and loyalty programs, which are tailored to individual consumer preferences and behaviors. The effectiveness of these strategies can be measured through key performance indicators such as conversion rates, customer retention, and average order value. By analyzing these factors, researchers can gain insights into the complex relationship between promotional tactics and consumer decision-making in the digital marketplace.

3.2 **Key Constructs**

Construct - Perception

In the realm of online shopping, perception refers to how individuals evaluate the process of obtaining information and buying products through digital platforms (Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006). This notion of perception encompasses multiple elements of the e-commerce experience, such as the layout of websites, how products are displayed, and feedback from other customers. The way consumers perceive these aspects can have a substantial impact on their confidence in the online marketplace and their readiness to participate in digital transactions. For e-commerce companies, it is essential to comprehend and handle customer perceptions to enhance user experience and build customer loyalty. Numerous studies suggest that pricing influences consumers' intention to purchase and their perception of value (Huang and Jiang, 2014; Zhou and Wong, 2003; Gilbert and Jackaria, 2003). Online retailers such as Amazon India, Flipkart, and Snapdeal employ various strategies like price reductions, time-limited offers, BOGO promotions, and significant discounts to heighten the allure of price promotions and increase perceived value. Research has demonstrated that the inclusion of customer reviews on websites enhances users' perception of the site's usefulness and social presence (Dash & Saji, 2008). Additionally, perception is linked to the enjoyment of shopping or improved shopping experiences that e-commerce platforms provide through promotional activities like online competitions, interactive gaming areas, and prize draws (Lu and Zhuang, 2018).

Construct - Savings

Sales promotions can convey financial savings by reducing the unit cost of an item, offering additional quantities at no extra charge, or providing refunds or rebates on future purchases. Price reductions and deviations from the reference price generate expectations of savings and mitigate spending discomfort. Most analytical and econometric models suggest that financial savings are the primary incentive for consumers to respond to promotions (Neslin 1990). Chandon et al. (2000) link deal-seeking behavior to economic benefits for online shoppers, viewing sales promotions as a financial advantage. They note that the monetary savings from website promotions benefit users (the savings benefit). Thus, the savings advantages of promotions can be classified as utilitarian, enhancing acquisition utility and the efficiency of online shopping.

3.3 **Research Gap**

Studies on online sales promotions' impact on consumer behavior are extensive, but few employ Smart PLS-SEM to evaluate their effectiveness, with traditional methods dominating prior research. Literature generally addresses

promotions like discounts, coupons, and loyalty programs, but understanding how Amazon India's specific strategies affect consumer decision-making aspects is lacking. India's unique e-commerce landscape requires a contextual analysis of sales promotions, and this study will investigate Amazon India's promotional events, examining their distinct impacts on consumer behavior. Despite studies recognizing promotions' influence on behaviors like brand switching and stockpiling, focused research on Amazon India's consumers, including their motivations, impacted product categories, price sensitivity, and repeat purchase behavior, is lacking.

3.4 Research Objective & Hypothesis

Objective

- To study various promotion tools and strategies of ecommerce player in India
- To propose a Model via PLS SEM approach and identify constructs for Amazon India India that influence customers shopping experience

Hypothesis

H1: Online customers' shopping experience is not influenced by ‘perception’

H2: Online customers' shopping experience is not influenced by ‘savings'

4 Methodology

The research utilized the PLS-SEM method to analyze the constructs and their impact on consumer shopping experiences. The study employed a quantitative research design, using a structured questionnaire to collect primary data from a sample of 1069 respondents. The objective of the research was to study various promotion tools and strategies of online retailer w.r.t Amazon India in capturing different responses from online shoppers. Primary data collected was collected through structured questionnaire electronically. The study employed convenience and snowball sampling techniques to select participants. The questionnaire focused on various promotional strategies used by Amazon India, employing a 5-point Likert Scale (ranging from 1-Strongly agree to 5-Strongly disagree) to gather data. Following the recommendation of Hair et al. (1998) for a minimum sample size of 15 times the number of variables, the researcher collected data from 1069 respondents, which exceeded this requirement. SPSS software was utilized to analyze descriptive statistics, while the PLS-SEM approach was employed to develop and statistically test the model.

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 Demographic Profile

Table 1: Demographic profile details

Dimension		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	462	43.22
	Male	607	56.78
Age	16-25 years	440	41.16
	25-35 years	452	42.28
	35-45 years	121	11.32
	Above 45 years	56	5.24
Occupation	Business/ Professional	279	26.10
	Working/Service	439	41.07
	Homemaker	28	2.62
	Student	266	24.88
	Other	57	5.33
Monthly Income	Less than Rs.15,000	245	22.92

	Rs.15,001 to 30,000	269	25.16
	Rs.30,001 to 45,000	166	15.53
	More than Rs.45,000	389	36.39

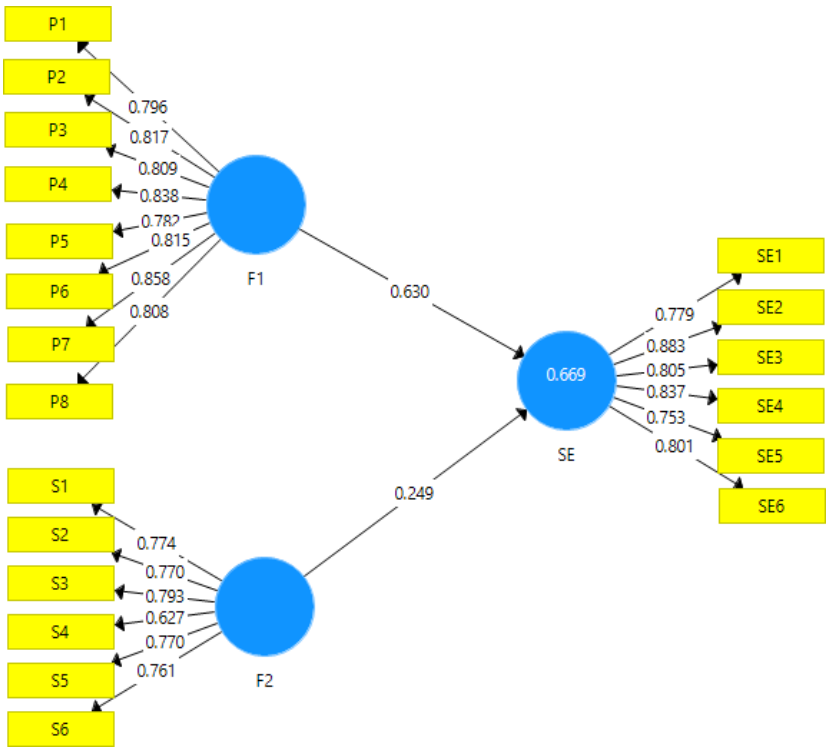
Source: Online Survey

Table 1 The data table provides demographic details of respondents based on gender, age, occupation, and monthly income. A majority (56.78%) are male, while 43.22% are female. Most respondents are aged between 16-35 years (83.44%), indicating a younger population. The dominant occupation categories are Working/Service" (41.07%) and "Students" (24.88%), while Business/Professional accounts for 26.10%. Regarding income, the highest proportion of respondents (36.39%) earn more than Rs. 45,000 monthly, with lower-income groups gradually decreasing. Overall, the sample represents a young, working or studying demographic, with varied income levels.

5.2 PLS-SEM Model

This study applies structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess the proposed model for Amazon India. SEM can be executed through two approaches: Covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) and Variance-based SEM (PLS-SEM). Many researchers argue that PLS-SEM is superior to CB-SEM (Sarstedt and Cheah, 2019; Hair et al., 2019), citing its enhanced predictive accuracy and contribution to theory development (Khan et al., 2019). Considering that this study represents an initial exploration of how sales promotion strategies as stimuli impact customers' online shopping experience, the researcher selected the smart PLS-SEM method over CB-SEM. The analysis was performed using SmartPLS (Ringle et al., 2015), examining the model to verify the reliability and validity of the constructs, followed by statistical testing to evaluate the hypotheses.

Figure 1 Model - Amazon India



Source: Developed by researcher using SmartPLS

Figure 1 presents Amazon India model that indicating two key factors, F1-Perception and F2-Savings, having impact on Shopping Experience (SE) of customers. F1 encompasses eight indicators (P1-P8), while F2 comprises six indicators (S1-S6). The Shopping Experience (SE) is measured using six indicators (SE1-SE6). All indicators meet or exceed the minimum loading threshold of 0.50. The Model reveals path coefficients of 0.630 between F1 and SE, and 0.249 between

F2 and SE. Additionally, it provides the R-Square value, a widely used metric for assessing structural models. The R-square value of 0.669 indicates that 66.9% of the variation in the dependent variable (Shopping Experience) can be explained by the independent variables (Perception and Savings).

Table 2.

Codes	Indicating statements
Code-P1	The website features favorable customer testimonials
Code-P2	The company consistently offers the best purchase price.
Code-P3	The company is renowned for providing substantial discount promotions.
Code-P4	The promotions offered are attention-grabbing.
Code-P5	Flash sales are highly enticing.
Code-P6	Favorable word-of-mouth recommendations increase my likelihood of purchasing from this website.
Code-P7	The company presents excellent deals during major sales events.
Code-P8	Customer feedback aids in making better purchasing decisions.
Code-S1	Provides coupon codes at checkout.
Code-S2	Online contests facilitate obtaining great deals on purchases.
Code-S3	I receive additional cashback through bank partnerships.
Code-S4	Offering 0% EMI options enhances my chances of buying.
Code-S5	I only shop on this website when cashback is available.
Code-S6	Buyback guarantee protects my investment.
Code-SE1	The company offers Cash on Delivery (COD) for most products.
Code-SE2	The company provides a wide selection of product options.
Code-SE3	The delivered product always matches the website description.
Code-SE4	I feel secure conducting online transactions.
Code-SE5	I typically compare prices on other websites before finalizing a purchase.
Code-SE6	I prefer shopping when this website offers numerous special promotions.

Source: Online Survey

5.3 **Validity and Reliability**

Table 3

Construct s	Indicator s	Mi n	Ma x	Mea n	Varianc e	Skew -ness	Kurtosi s	Outer Loading s	Reflectiv e Indicator Loadings
Perception (F1)	P1	1	5	3.78	1.01	-0.94	0.82	0.796	0.634
	P2	1	5	3.69	1.02	-0.80	0.47	0.817	0.667
	P3	1	5	3.63	1.01	-0.64	0.14	0.809	0.655

	P4	1	5	3.72	0.94	-0.84	0.78	0.838	0.703
	P5	1	5	3.65	1.02	-0.68	0.25	0.782	0.612
	P6	1	5	3.73	0.99	-0.87	0.70	0.815	0.665
	P7	1	5	3.87	0.99	-1.03	1.01	0.858	0.736
	P8	1	5	3.90	1.02	-1.15	1.26	0.808	0.652
Savings (F2)	S1	1	5	3.31	1.13	-0.29	-0.40	0.774	0.585
	S2	1	5	3.31	1.21	-0.32	-0.51	0.770	0.576
	S3	1	5	3.31	1.20	-0.30	-0.55	0.793	0.604
	S4	1	5	3.37	1.27	-0.34	-0.49	0.627	0.563
	S5	1	5	3.45	1.09	-0.51	-0.10	0.770	0.607
	S6	1	5	3.52	1.05	-0.56	0.02	0.761	0.635
Shopping Experience e (SE)	SE1	1	5	3.87	1.04	-0.97	0.67	0.779	0.607
	SE2	1	5	3.90	1.02	-0.98	0.77	0.883	0.780
	SE3	1	5	3.59	1.13	-0.68	0.03	0.805	0.649
	SE4	1	5	3.76	1.11	-0.75	0.16	0.837	0.702
	SE5	1	5	3.76	1.14	-0.88	0.36	0.753	0.565
	SE6	1	5	3.75	1.10	-0.81	0.34	0.801	0.640

Source: Data compilation using SmartPLS software

To be considered satisfactory, outer loadings should exceed 0.5 (Hair et al. 2014) and reflective indicator loadings above 0.5 Hulland (1999) indicate that items effectively measure the latent construct. This criterion has been met in the current study (Table 3).

Table 4 Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Construct	Cronbach's α	rho_A	CR	AVE	(1)	(2)	(3)
F1- Perception	0.928	0.929	0.941	0.666	0.816		
F2 - Savings	0.846	0.858	0.885	0.564	0.667	0.751	
SE - Shopping Experience	0.895	0.900	0.920	0.657	0.797	0.670	0.811

Source: Data compilation using SmartPLS software

A Cronbach's α above 0.7 (Nunnaly, 1978) signifies reliable scale variables. Joreskog's (1971) composite reliability assesses internal consistency, with 0.60-0.70 "acceptable in exploratory research" and 0.70-0.90 "satisfactory to good." The table confirms good internal consistency. Dijkstra and Henseler (2015) introduced rho_A, shows all values within this range, indicating rho_ model suitability. Constructs have an AVE over 0.5, meeting Fornell and Larcker's (1981) convergent validation criterion.

5.4 **Criteria to assess Model**

Once the reliability and validity of the constructed measures have been confirmed, the subsequent phase involves assessing the structural model's outcomes. This assessment encompasses examining the model's predictive capabilities and the interrelationships among constructs. The key parameters for evaluating the PLS-SEM structural model include the significance of path coefficients, the magnitude of R-sqaure values, the f2 effect size, and the Q2 value's predictive relevance.

Path coefficients

In a model, a path coefficient is a normalized value illustrating the connection between latent and endogenous constructs,

ranging from -1 to +1. Values near +1 indicate a strong positive association, while those close to -1 suggest a strong negative association. Coefficients near zero typically denote weaker, often insignificant, relationships. Bootstrapping results in Table 5 provide standard errors to evaluate the significance of these coefficients. For Amazon India, Figure 1 shows a structural model with path relationships of 0.630 between F1 and SE, and 0.249 between F2 and SE, both indicating positive associations.

Standard Bootstrap Results

Table 5

Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Mean	SE	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1: F1-> SE	0.630	0.598	0.035	17.64	0.000	Supported
H2: F2-> SE	0.249	0.281	0.037	6.69	0.000	Supported

Source: Data compilation using SmartPLS

The path coefficients for F1-> SE and F2-> SE are 0.630 and 0.249, respectively, indicating statistically significant and positive correlation.

Two hypotheses are proposed:
H0: Online customers' shopping experience is not influenced by perception
H1: Online customers' shopping experience is influenced by perception

According to Table 5, t-value of 17.64 (0.630/0.035) surpasses the critical value (> 1.96 for a two-tailed test at 5% significance level) with a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05), hence we reject the null hypothesis and support the alternative hypothesis (Fung, Han Ping, 2015). This suggests that perception (F1) significantly influences shopping experience (SE) of online customers.

H0: Online customers' shopping experience is not influenced by savings
H2: Online customers' shopping experience is influenced by savings
Similarly, from Table 5, t-value of 6.69 (0.249/0.037) surpasses the critical value (> 1.96 for a two-tailed test at 5% significance level) with a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05), hence we reject the null hypothesis and support the alternative hypothesis (Fung, Han Ping, 2015). This suggests that savings (F2) significantly influences shopping experience (SE) of online customers.

Other Criteria
Adjusted R-square value of 0.668 (coefficient of determination) indicates that 'Perception' and 'Savings' factors account for 66.9% of the variability in shopping experience. Amazon India, 'Perception' demonstrates a large effect (f2 = 0.667) on the endogenous variable 'Shopping Experience' and 'Savings' shows a medium effect (f2 = 1.104) on the Shopping Experience. Finally, another criteria, predictive relevance (Q2=0.435) according to Geisser and Stone (1994), exhibits considerable predictive relevance for Amazon India.
Since all outcomes meet the requirements, it can be concluded that the Model fulfills all established criteria for the 'Amazon India' Model development.

6 Findings

Partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM) was constructed for Amazon India India with all the model's assumptions being. Upon analyzing the constructs related to various sales promotion indicators, it was determined that two factors, namely 'Perception' and 'Savings', were key in elucidating customers' shopping experiences on Amazon India.
Amazon India is favored by respondents for its positive customer reviews (eWOM), which play a crucial role in shaping better purchase decisions. Unlike other platforms, Amazon India does not actively promote its products through celebrity

endorsements or sports figures. While its shipping and delivery options are not particularly highlighted, the company has emphasized promotional strategies like early or 1-day delivery as being especially effective. However, cashback offers have proven to be a key sales promotion strategy for Amazon India, attracting customers and enhancing the shopping experience. The platform also provides features like Buyback Guarantee, Loyalty Programs, and Customer Reviews, which contribute to its overall appeal.

7 Managerial Implication

The present study offers valuable insights for Amazon India's marketing managers, investors, and top-level management by highlighting the influence of sales promotion strategies on customer shopping experiences. A deeper understanding of the constructs formed by various sales promotion indicators can guide Amazon India in crafting future strategies that effectively target customer preferences and enhance their shopping experience.

Amazon India can benefit from aligning its promotional strategies, such as cashback offers, with the demographic profile of its customers. This analysis can help top managers allocate funds more effectively during key annual sales events like the Great Indian Sale, as well as during festive seasons and regular periods, maximizing the return on marketing investments.

Focusing on middle-class Indian consumers—who represent a significant portion of the population—could drive growth. These value-conscious shoppers often seek more for less, making it essential for Amazon India to tailor its loyalty programs toward price reductions and cashback rather than additional value-added services like music, movies, or early delivery, which may be less appealing to this segment.

Moreover, Amazon India can enhance customer engagement by adopting a segmentation strategy, offering personalized user experiences based on factors like age, gender, and shopping behavior. For example, a younger audience could be presented with a more interactive and enjoyable interface to improve engagement and satisfaction. By focusing on these tailored approaches, Amazon India can strengthen its market leadership and drive long-term customer loyalty.

8 Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of perception and savings in shaping consumer experiences on Amazon India. Sales promotions like discounts and cashback offers significantly enhance consumer engagement and satisfaction. Future research could explore cross-platform comparisons or the influence of psychological factors on consumer behavior.

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