

THE WAR BETWEEN FLIPKART AND AMAZON INDIA: A STUDY ON CUSTOMER PERCEPTION

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ABSTRACT

Today's business world is highly competitive. Every firm is in the race to win more and more customers. It seems like every business organisation is in like a virtual war with one another where one organisation attacks another with their strategies and the other defends itself. This war though exists in every business sector; it can be distinctly seen in the e-commerce industry. The e-tailing websites try to outrun their competitors by adopting newer strategies every time and thereby gain better goodwill in the market which will ultimately increase their web traffic. This study is an insight into the competitive scenario of the e-commerce industry of India. It aims to check the rivalry between the two giants that operate in India viz. Amazon India and Flipkart and ponder upon the customer perception towards these strategies that both the firms adopt from time to time.

KEYWORDS: *Amazon India, Flipkart, E-Commerce, Customer Perception*

INTRODUCTION

Today's business world is highly competitive. Every firm is in the race to win more and more customers. It seems like every business organisation is in like a virtual war with one another where one organisation attacks another with their strategies and the other defends itself. With respect to the concept of war in business, Madansky (2005) highlights the concept of game theory as a zero-sum-two-person game, where one wins and the other loses. The concept of Marketing Warfare deals with the application of military strategies to different marketing problems (Trout, 2012, p. 38). The authors forwarded a Strategic square to justify the argument. They suggested four aspects of Marketing Warfare viz. Offensive, Defensive, Flanking and Guerrilla.

This war can be distinctly seen in the e-commerce industry. Even though the traditional form of purchasing and selling of goods and services is preferred today; yet the modern form of it i.e. the electronic form of purchasing and selling of goods and services is grasping the society in a rapid pace. This electronic form of commerce is popularly known as e-commerce.

Though there are many players in the e-commerce sector of India, yet Flipkart and Amazon India seem to play the dominant role.

Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal, both alumni of the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi founded Flipkart in the year 2007 with a mere capital of Rs. 4 Lakhs. Prior to that, they were employees of amazon.com. Flipkart is headquartered in Bengaluru, Karnataka and it operates exclusively in India. However, the company is registered in Singapore and is

owned by a Singapore based holding company. The two partners started Flipkart from a small room at Koramangala in Bengaluru and registered it as 'Flipkart Online Services Pvt. Ltd' in the Registrar of Companies. The website initially dealt only in bookselling the business and later expanded its product lines to different merchandise. In May 2018, the US giant Walmart negotiated a deal to acquire Flipkart and finally closed the deal on August 18th, 2018 by taking over 77% of Flipkart's share at a price of US \$16 Billion.

On the other hand, Amazon.com was founded by Jeff Bezos in the year 1994. It is an American e-commerce company. It is headquartered in Seattle, Washington. Initially, the company was incorporated with the name "Cadabra" on July 5, 1994. It went online as Amazon.com in the year 1995. Amazon.com too started its business as an online bookstore. Over the years, it expanded by selling other merchandise. Amazon.com entered India with the name 'Amazon India' in June 2013. As in July 2013, Amazon's Indian rival Flipkart announced to invest \$ 1 Billion to increase its business; Amazon quickly countered by announcing to invest \$2 Billion (Rs 12,000 Crores) in India to expand business. With the passage of time, Amazon received an excellent response in India and has turned itself to be one of the most trustworthy e-commerce websites.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ahuja (2018), makes a study on customer perception towards the purchase of electronic goods through Amazon and Flipkart. The study hovers around four basic aspects of viz. Gender and satisfaction level towards Amazon, Gender and satisfaction level towards Flipkart, Income and satisfaction level towards Amazon and Income and satisfaction level towards Flipkart. The paper finds out that males are more interested in purchasing electronic goods online than females. However, people get the interest to purchase electronic goods online only when they are exposed to offers irrespective of their age and income.

Balasubramanian & Isswarya (2017) in their research paper discusses on the customer satisfaction level between Flipkart and Amazon among the customers in an educational institution. The data were collected from 179 samples who basically post graduate students and the tools for analysis were simple statistical tools like a percentage. The study also ponders upon investigating the major factors that ultimately impact customer satisfaction towards Flipkart and Amazon. The questionnaire focuses upon the various domains which customers generally emphasises upon while shopping online like order tracking and delivery, website usage, product availability, payment procedures etc. The paper concludes by stating that in the war between Flipkart and Amazon; Flipkart wins by providing an efficient delivery system, user-friendly website and exact tracking facility.

Burt and Sparks (2003) check the interaction between retail processes and e-commerce. The study finds that with the benefits of internet and inclusion of cost reductions methods in operations, one can enhance its competitive position in process, structure and relationship terms. The paper also discusses the benefits of e-commerce and the uncertainty of the future e-commerce industry. The paper concludes by suggesting that new business models and formats should be developed for retailers and e-commerce to improve the activities of all sorts.

Dahiya Richa (2012), conducts a study on the role of demographic factors and their impact on the shopping behaviour of online customers. The study opines that e-business is a new form of business in India which has tremendous potential. It has been growing significantly ever since its introduction in the country. The author even comments that the

field of E-Business will reshape the entire shopping scenario across the globe. Considering it to be the need of the hour every other company is now running their own online portals to sell their products and services.

DV et. al (2015), studies about the perceptions of customers towards the services offered by different online marketers. The authors ponder mainly on the aspects like satisfaction with the product and service offered, Preference to online shopping over traditional shopping, satisfaction with the mode of payment, easy return facility, after sales service etc. The paper suggests that the instalment system and proper display of the size and specification of the goods on the website can be an added advantage to the organisation. They are in the opinion that as the numbers of online shoppers are growing every day, the online transactions portals should be safe and secure for every e-tailing website.

Goyal (2014) studies about the perception of Indian customers towards online shopping. The study focuses on discovering the factors that induce online sales and identify the loopholes in it. Furthermore, the study also aims to find out the most and the least popular categories of products that are purchased online. The paper finds out that though online shopping is growing rapidly, yet there are many cases where people find the deals online but prefer purchasing offline. The researcher also states there exist a reverse trend as well where people touch and feel the product offline but purchase it online.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Today's business world is highly competitive. Every firm is in the race to win more and more customers. It seems like every business organisation is in like a virtual war with one another where one organisation attacks another with their strategies and the other defends itself. This war is also evident in the e-commerce industry as well, which is the fastest growing industry across the globe. E-commerce is that sphere where almost every other organisation is trying to blend itself up to in order to meet the competitive scenario. This study is thereby an attempt to study the competitive scenario between the two giant e-commerce firms in India viz. Amazon India and Flipkart adopt in order to retain their respective market positions and thereby attain more customer base.

Research Gap

After an extensive literature review, the researcher finds out that there is a very minimal number of researches done from the comparative aspect of Flipkart and Amazon India's marketing strategies. Additionally, the researcher did not come across any work conducted on the customer perception of the marketing strategies of the two firms.

Objectives of the Study

The study hovers around one major objective viz.-

- To study the customer perception regarding the warfare scenario of Flipkart and Amazon India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for the study is both descriptive and exploratory research and as such, it involves a survey of both Primary and secondary data.

Sampling Unit

The subjects for the study were within the age group of 17 to 48 years. Thus, the sampling unit includes students,

job holders, professionals and business persons. The researcher has selected this age group because it is seen that most of the internet users in India lie within this age group.

Population and Sample Size

The **population** for the study includes all the users of Flipkart and Amazon in India. However, as the total number of users are unknown to the researcher, the population is considered undefined.

The **sample size** for the study is determined using the following formula-

$$n = \frac{1}{(MoE)^2}, \text{ where,}$$

n= sample size and MoE = Margin of Error

The MoE is kept at 5% and confidence level at 95%. The sample size, thus calculated is 400. It further satisfies the Rule of thumb consideration.

Sampling Procedure

The information is collected using the online form of questionnaires with the help of snow balling technique of non-probability sampling. The researcher selected four different zones as contact point viz. Guwahati from the East cum Northeast Zone, New Delhi from the North Zone, Bengaluru from the South Zone and Mumbai from the West Zone. From each of the respective zones, 55 people are contacted who further act as respondents. They are enquired about their level of awareness of the eight selected bases of Flipkart and Amazon India that were analyzed in the first objective and subsequently their perceptions regarding the competitive approaches are studied.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study extends to two giants of the e-commerce industry of India viz. Flipkart and Amazon India. The purview of the study can be extended to the whole of India.

Significance of the Study

Business war is a very significant concept which is very distinctively seen in the e-commerce industry these days. The e-tailing websites try to outrun their competitors by adopting newer strategies every time and thereby gain better goodwill in the market which will ultimately increase their web traffic.

This study is an insight into the competitive scenario of the e-commerce industry of India. It aims to check the rivalry between the two giants that operate in India viz. Amazon India and Flipkart and check the customer perception towards the warfare scenario of the giants.

Analysis and Interpretation

A null hypothesis and an alternate hypothesis have been constructed by the researcher to analyse the referred objective. They are-

H₀: There is no significant difference between customer perceptions regarding the warfare strategies of Flipkart and Amazon India.

H_a : There is a significant difference between customer perceptions regarding the warfare strategies of Flipkart and Amazon India.

Pilot Survey & Cronbach's Alpha

The researcher conducted a pilot survey to find out the problems that may come up amidst the survey and thereby take corrective measures to overcome the difficulties and check the viability of the Sampling Procedure using *Cronbach's alpha*. Nunnally (1978)¹ stated 0.7 to be a suitable reliability coefficient but the pilot survey across 40 respondents calculates it to be .929 which satisfies the test of reliability.

It is the p-value that would help the researcher analyse if the two condition Means are statistically different. If the p-value is greater than 0.05, the researcher shall reject the Alternative Hypothesis. On the contrary, if it is less than or equal to 0.05, the researcher shall accept the Alternative Hypothesis.

The following can be interpreted from the actual survey conducted across 400 subjects from India

Rating of flipkart's Mobile Application and Amazon India's Mobile Application based upon Different Attributes

Table 1: Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Flipkart's - Fastness and security	3.12	203	1.139	.080
	Amazon India - Fastness and security	3.25	203	1.104	.077
Pair 2	Flipkart - Order Placing	3.23	201	1.182	.083
	Amazon India- Order Placing	3.29	201	1.208	.085
Pair 3	Flipkart- Checkout	3.17	197	1.098	.078
	Amazon India – Checkout	3.10	197	1.178	.084
Pair 4	Flipkart - Less memory consumption	2.85	195	1.014	.073
	Amazon -Less memory consumption	3.01	195	1.101	.079
Pair 5	Flipkart - Visual Attractiveness	2.97	197	1.138	.081
	Amazon India- Visual Attractiveness	3.02	197	1.235	.088
Pair 6	Flipkart - More Language Options	2.79	199	.996	.071
	Amazon India- More Language Options	2.95	199	1.158	.082

Table 2

		Paired Differences					T	DF	Sig. (2-Tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval Of The Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Fastness and Security	-.128	1.149	.081	-.287	.031	-1.588	202	.114
Pair 2	Order Placing	-.065	1.217	.086	-.234	.105	-.754	200	.452
Pair 3	Checkout	.071	1.113	.079	-.085	.228	.896	196	.371
Pair 4	Less memory consumption	-.159	1.153	.083	-.322	.004	-1.925	194	.056
Pair 5	Visual Attractiveness	-.046	1.334	.095	-.233	.142	-.481	196	.631
Pair 6	More Language Options	-.156	.949	.067	-.288	-.023	-2.317	198	.022

It can be interpreted that for all the first five pairs of comparison the null hypothesis is accepted. It means that people find no significant difference between the mobile applications of Amazon and Flipkart. Both the applications seem to cater their needs based on the bases provided except for the 6th pair i.e. 'More Language Options.' As the mean value for Amazon India in this context is more than the mean value of Flipkart i.e. 2.95 and 2.75 respectively; it indicates that the customers are aware of the warfare strategy of Amazon India to provide more language options in its mobile application.

Rating of Flipkart's Big Billion Day And Amazon India's Great Indian Sale Based On Different Attributes

Table 3: Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Big Billion Day – Offers	3.16	198	1.151	.082
	Great Indian n- Offers	3.25	198	1.134	.081
Pair 2	Big Billion Day – Discounts	3.13	194	1.096	.079
	Great Indian Sale – Discounts	3.30	194	1.136	.082
Pair 3	Big Billion Day - Flash Sales	2.94	190	1.070	.078
	Great Indian Sale - Flash Sales	3.13	190	1.149	.083
Pair 4	Big Billion Day Exclusive Products	3.07	190	1.024	.074
	Great Indian Sale - Exclusive Products	3.09	190	1.132	.082
Pair 5	Big Billion Day - Stock Availability	2.83	191	1.111	.080
	Great Indian Sale- Stock Availability	3.09	191	1.099	.080
Pair 6	Big Billion Day- Quality of Products	3.06	192	1.076	.078
	Great Indian Sale- Quality of Products	3.24	192	1.100	.079
Pair 7	Big Billion Day- Payment Options	3.33	190	1.140	.083
	Great Indian Sale- Payment Options	3.42	190	1.239	.090
Pair 8	Big Billion Day - Delivery Speed	3.08	192	1.132	.082
	Great Indian Sale- Delivery Speed	3.28	192	1.176	.085

Table 4

		Paired Differences					T	DF	Sig. (2-Tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Offers	-.091	1.067	.076	-.240	.059	-1.199	197	.232
Pair 2	Discounts	-.175	.998	.072	-.317	-.034	-2.447	193	.015
Pair 3	Flash Sales	-.189	1.011	.073	-.334	-.045	-2.583	189	.011
Pair 4	Exclusive Products	-.026	1.000	.073	-.169	.117	-.363	189	.717
Pair 5	Stock Availability	-.257	1.027	.074	-.403	-.110	-3.452	190	.001
Pair 6	Quality of Products	-.177	1.053	.076	-.327	-.027	-2.329	191	.021
Pair 7	Payment Options	-.089	1.097	.080	-.246	.068	-1.124	189	.262
Pair 8	Delivery Speed	-.193	1.107	.080	-.350	-.035	-2.413	191	.017

It can be interpreted that pair no. 1, 3, 4 and 7 accepts the null hypothesis. It means that people find no significant difference between the festive season sales of Amazon and Flipkart on the grounds of Offers, Flash Sales, Exclusive Products and Payment Options. Both seem to cater their needs based on the bases provided except for pair no. 2, 5, 6 and 8. As the mean value for Amazon India for discounts offered is more than the mean value of Flipkart i.e. 3.30 and 3.13 respectively; it indicates that the customers are more attracted towards the discounts offered by Amazon during the festive season sales. Additionally, the mean value for Amazon India is 3.09 whereas the mean value for Flipkart is 2.83 when it was asked about stock availability. This indicates that the respondents are in the opinion that Amazon India has wider stock availability as in comparison to Flipkart. Similarly, it can be interpreted that Amazon lists better quality of products as in comparison to Flipkart during the sales as the mean value for the former 3.24 and that of the latter is 3.06. Last but not least, most of the respondents are in the opinion that Amazon India delivers faster than Flipkart as the mean value of the former is 3.28 and that of the latter is 3.08.

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that where on four grounds the respondents seem to be indifferent towards both the firms; on four other grounds people seem to prefer Amazon India more than Flipkart.

Rating of the Advertisements of Flipkart and the Advertisements of Amazon India Based on the Different Attributes

Table 5: Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Amazon India- Simplicity	3.14	195	1.082	.078
	Flipkart – Simplicity	3.12	195	1.031	.074
Pair 2	Amazon India- Entertainment	3.16	194	1.123	.081
	Flipkart – Entertainment	3.26	194	1.149	.082
Pair 3	Amazon India- Emotion	3.97	194	1.079	.077
	Flipkart – Emotion	2.98	194	1.023	.073
Pair 4	Amazon India- Attention Grabbing	3.24	191	1.175	.085

	Flipkart - Attention Grabbing	3.26	191	1.092	.079
Table 5 Contd.,					
Pair 5	Amazon India - Retaining and Recalling	2.99	192	1.144	.083
	Flipkart - Retaining and Recalling	3.07	192	1.064	.077
Pair 6	Amazon India - Discounts and Offers	3.21	194	1.148	.082
	Flipkart - Discounts and Offers	3.19	194	1.087	.078
Pair 7	Amazon India- Exclusive Sales	3.11	193	1.067	.077
	Flipkart - Exclusive Sales	3.15	193	1.091	.079

Table 6

		Paired Differences					T	DF	Sig. (2-Tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Simplicity	.021	.963	.069	-.116	.157	.297	194	.766
Pair 2	Entertainment	.098	.947	.068	-.036	.232	1.440	193	.005
Pair 3	Emotion	-.005	1.005	.072	-.147	.137	-.071	193	.943
Pair 4	Attention Grabbing	-.021	1.041	.075	-.170	.128	-.278	190	.381
Pair 5	Retaining and Recalling	-.078	1.013	.073	-.222	.066	-1.069	191	.016
Pair 6	Discounts and Offers	.021	.997	.072	-.121	.162	.288	193	.774
Pair 7	Exclusive Sales	-.041	.962	.069	-.178	.095	-.599	192	.003

It can be interpreted that pair no. 1, 3 and 6 accepts the null hypothesis. It means that people find no significant difference between the advertisements of Amazon and Flipkart on the grounds of Simplicity, Emotions and Discounts and Offers. Both seem to cater their needs based on the bases provided except for pair no. 2, 4, 5 and 7. As the mean value for Amazon India for the entertainment aspect is less than the mean value of Flipkart i.e. 3.16 and 3.26 respectively; it indicates that the customers are more attracted towards the advertisements of Flipkart when it comes to entertainment. Additionally, the mean value for Amazon India is 3.24 whereas the mean value for Flipkart is 3.26 when it was asked about attention-grabbing capacity of the advertisements. This indicates that the respondents are in the opinion that Flipkart advertisements are more attractive than Amazon India's. Similarly, it can be interpreted that Flipkart's advertisements are easy to retain and recall as in comparison to Amazon India as the mean value for the former 3.07 and that of the latter is 2.99. Last but not the least, most of the respondents are in the opinion that more exclusive sales are listed in Flipkart as in comparison to Amazon India as the mean value of the former is 3.15 and that of the latter is 3.11.

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that where on three grounds the respondents seem to be indifferent towards both the firms; on four other grounds people seem to prefer Flipkart more than Amazon India.

Findings and Summary

The study throws light on various aspects related to Flipkart and Amazon India. It highlights that people accept both the mobile applications as indifferent from one another based upon the attributes enquired. However, they are aware of the aspect that Amazon used the strategy of more language options. Additionally, they opine that Discounts, Stock availability, Delivery speed and Quality of the products is better in Amazon India. It was also seen that the respondents are

indifferent towards the advertisements of Flipkart and Amazon India on the grounds of Emotions, Simplicity, Discounts and Offers. However, it is seen Flipkart win this war when it comes to Entertainment, Attention Grabbing, Attractiveness, Retain and Recall and Exclusive sales. Though Flipkart is the market leader, it was observed that a major chunk of the respondents i.e. 56.7% would like to recommend Amazon India to others. A valid reason for this is that respondents shop online for wider accessibility of products of superior quality.

It is observed that both Flipkart and Amazon India are into deep neck competition and are in a brutal war where one tries to wipe the other out. Both these firms are seen to apply various strategies from time to time in order to make the other feel their presence. But it was very unfortunate to find that despite all the efforts Flipkart puts; people seem to recommend Amazon India more to others. Though people are more attracted towards Flipkart, yet it was observed that many of them choose not to retain with Flipkart, rather switch to Amazon India for its better quality and range of products. Flipkart should learn from its mistake and should make a balance between convenience, quality and quantity in order to retain its leadership position in the long run.

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