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ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Consumers' Perception on Sales Promotion Tools at the Time of Making Purchase Decision: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Sales promotion is the marketing process of lifting sales of an organization by influencing the customers through attractive benefits such as discounts, free samples, bonus packs, contests, free gifts to trigger the buying decision of the customer. Through sales promotion the company can maximize their sales, introduce new products and services to the customers, clear out inventories etc. The sales promotion is generally made on temporary basis either within a given period of time or till stocks available. The paper describes different methods and techniques of sales promotion. The paper aims in analyzing different tools of sales promotion and determines their degree of effectiveness at the time of making customers' buying decision. The study was conducted at Kolkata. The primary data is collected from 200 respondents through questionnaire method and the analysis of data has been made using SPSS 21.

KEYWORDS— Sales promotion, discounts, free samples, contests, purchase decision cent-off deals

1. INTRODUCTION

Sales Promotion is the marketing process aimed to maximize sales by stimulating the customers' economic motives, through discounts, coupons, distribution of free samples, gift voucher, lotteries, contest, etc. for a limited period of time or till stocks available in order to drive the purchase decision of the customers. The objectives of sales promotion can be (1) Introduction of new products or services; (2) Attracting new customers and retaining the existing ones; (3) Maintaining sales of seasonal goods; (4) Meeting the challenge of competition; (5) First-in-first-out activity of evacuating old stock of goods.

Due to the proliferation of TV Channels, advertisements have become brick and mortar of sponsoring TV programs and due to their omnipresence they have become monotonous among the viewers to turn off their attention.

Viewers are only triggered if there are promotional offers in the TV Ads. Although advertisement is an important part of marketing but sales promotion i.e. advertisement with special offers, discounts, gifts has become more effective to draw the customers' attention in motivating their purchase decision. And thus, sales promotion has become a significant part of marketing in the present competitive environment of business.

Normally a customer's psychology is primarily oriented towards attainment of economic benefits from a purchase rather from the functional benefit of the product or service. When a customer view the messages such as "50% discount till stocks available", "buy one get one free", "win a car," "win 3 night 4 day free tour at Singapore" he/she can be initiated

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towards buying to access the offer. These being the essential part of sales promotion.

Sales promotions are derived into Trade promotions by the manufacturers to target distributors, wholesalers or retailers in the supply chain in order to create push their product in the market.

Some Tools of Sales Promotion

The commonly used tools of sales promotion are:

- 1) **Free samples:** Free samples of shampoo, washing powder, coffee powder, etc. are provided while purchasing various items from the market. Sometimes these free samples are also distributed by the company's marketing team. These are distributed to attract consumers to try out a new product and thereby create new customers. Free samples are also distributed by some business house such as pharmaceuticals or book publishers among selected person such as doctors, teachers to popularize their products through recommendation.
- 2) **Premium or Bonus offer:** A milk-shaker along with 100 grams of coffee, mug with 1 kilogram pack of health drinks, toothbrush with large pack of toothpaste, 20% extra in a 5 litre pack of edible oil are the examples of premium or bonus and given free during product purchase. They are effective in attracting consumers to buy a particular product or they can be useful to encourage and reward existing customers.
- 3) **Exchange schemes:** In this scheme a new product at less than its original price can be purchased by exchanging an old one. This is useful for drawing attention to product improvement. Exchange your old 21 inch CRT TV with a 42 inch LED TV and get an exchange value upto Rs. 2000.
- 4) **Price-discount offer:** Under this offer, products are sold at a price lower than the original price. Rs. 10 off on purchase of 3 × 100 grams soap, Rs. 30 off on a pack of

500 grams of tea, Rs. 2000 off on 1.5 ton air conditioner etc. are some common examples. Such offer is designed to hike up the sales during off-season and sometimes while introducing a new product in the market.

- 5) **Coupons:** These are issued by manufacturers either within the product package or through an advertisement printed in the newspaper or magazine or through email messages. These coupons can be presented to the retailer while buying the product. The holder of the coupon gets the product at a discount. For example, pizza makers provide a coupon with delivery of an order which can be used to avail discount for another future purchase. The price reduction under this scheme attracts the attention of the prospective customers towards new or improved products.
- 6) **Scratch and win offer:** To induce the customer to buy a particular product 'scratch and win' scheme is also offered. Under this scheme a customer scratch a particular embedded area on the package of the product and gets the benefit according to the message written there. In this way customers may get some item free as mentioned on the marked area or may avail of price-off, or sometimes visit different places on special tour arranged by the manufacturers.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Ahmed S. A. et al., (2015)¹ said motivating the consumers in selecting brands or insisting the consumers to buy more items is a difficult task. Promotional benefit is advantageous to stimulate the consumers to evaluate their affordability over different brands and make positive selection. To hike up the sales, different promotional schemes such as reduction in price, discount offers and coupons, bonus packs, distribution of free samples are offered to encourage the consumers' preference to buy product. The research study reveals that the consumers' purchase decisions are motivated by the promotional strategies undertaken by the business entities such as offering price discounts, gift coupons, free samples, bonus packs etc.

Hsu T. et al., (2009)² propounded that although various promotional tools are available, subject to the budget constraint, it not possible for a company to invest on all such tools to convey information to convince the customers. Sales promotion is an important short-term technique designed to influence the purchasing behavior of the customer to make impulsive purchase and business goals are achieved at minimum cost.

Soni N. et al., (2013)³ proposed that among the various promotional strategies used for influencing the customers' purchase decision, sales promotion is the optimum promotional mix mostly used to maximize sales and invoke the customer purchase decision. The study reveals that among various techniques of sales promotion, special offers, premiums and contests are the most convincing techniques for customers' purchase decision and deserving for the enterprise.

Shamout M.D. (2016)⁴ stated in order to sustain competitive position in terms of profit and market share, retailers employ the effective tools of sales promotions to motivate the consumer towards purchasing. The study reveals that considering the aspects – brand switching and customer loyalty, the consumer will be positively driven toward buying a product or a service if various promotional tools such as price discount, free samples, and buy one get one free, are used.

Filip A. (2011)⁵ stated that the relationship tools generally used for marketing are loyalty cards, customer clubs and sales promotion. Although long lasting benefits are offered through loyalty cards and customer clubs, to attract new customers and their retention for repurchase depends on tools and techniques of sales promotion. And hence, the company can identify the requirements the customers, their choice and their perception towards various promotional schemes.

Nagadeepa C. et al., (2015)⁶ conducted a study which explores that sales promotion is a powerful element of promotional mix which is

widely used to increase the sales by influencing the customers' buying decision. In this study the important sales promotion techniques – rebate/discount offers, bonus packs, coupons, loyalty schemes, and contests were identified and it was revealed that rebates/discount offers and loyalty schemes trigger the customers towards impulsive purchase.

Daramola, G.C. et al., (2014)⁷ conducted this study to determine the comparative significance of the technique employed for sales promotion. The study revealed that sales promotion is the most influential promotional instrument that leads to brand loyalty. When sales promotion become effective and efficient it attracts consumers and invokes their impulsive buying motive, but it must align with the target group of customers.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

a) Importance of sales promotion as a tool of marketing promotion

In the words of F, Robert C. Blattberg and Scott A. Neslin sales promotion can be defined as "a key ingredient in marketing campaigns, forming of miscellaneous collection of incentive tools, mostly short term, designed to kindle quicker and greater purchase of specific products or services by consumers or the trade.

The term "promotion" originates from Latin Word "Promovere" which means to move forward. That means to move forward a product in the channels of distribution. It is an indisputable fact that one of the central functions of management is Promotion. In its far-reaching expansive sense Promotion includes all those functions which have to do with the marketing of product and all other behavior deliberated to increase and expand the market.

Promotion as a marketing function can be conceptualized as a persuasive communication of the components of marketing program to target audiences with the purpose to aid

exchange between the marketer and the consumer which may satisfy the objectives of organization and consumers.

Sales Promotion stands apart from the other promotional methods in comparison that they are short term promotional tool with a primary objective of increasing the sales of the product or in a more lucid statement it can be said that sales promotion is an incentive tool given by the company to the various stakeholders to increase the sales of the product.

Sales Promotion also stands apart from that of the other methods of promotions in its sagacity that it uses a more straight forward approach of appealing to the consumers in a rational way. The central route of persuading the consumers and the expected direct response feedback makes the results more aligned to the corporate objectives.

b) Benefits of Sales Promotion

The incentives offered to the consumers by sales promotion are conducive in a free market economy to take a purchase decision. Sales Promotion tools essentially is an accelerating tool, designed to speed up selling process and maximize sales volume. It does not give any reason for the consumers to buy the product however, but it definitely gives an incentive to buy. The price conscious customers eagerly await an opportunity where the company gives sales promotion to customers.

Farris and Quelch have proposed a number of sales promotional benefits flowing from manufacturers and consumers. Sales Promotions enable manufacturers to adjust a short term variations in the supply and the demand .They enable manufacturers to test how high a list price they can charge, because they can always discount it. Sales promotional tools significantly alter the loyalty status of the customers. It is definitely an attempt to induce the shifting loyals to stick to a particular brand at least during the period when such promotional offers are into effect. The switchers stop switching the brand to

exploit the incentive options offered and feel as "smart shoppers". As for the brand loyals however, sales promotional offers given by the preferred brand reinforces the level of loyalty.

The objectives and the various schemes used as sales promotion tools are charted below

Objectives of Sales Promotion	Commonly used Sales Promotion schemes targeted at consumers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing a new product • Increasing Sales Volume • Reducing Cost of the product • Boosting up the sales force • Developing new prospects 	Sales contests, Cash refunds, Frequency programmes, Patronage awards, Games, Sweepstakes, Complimentary packs, Banded packs, Discounts, Scratch cards, Reduced Price packs, Coupons etc.

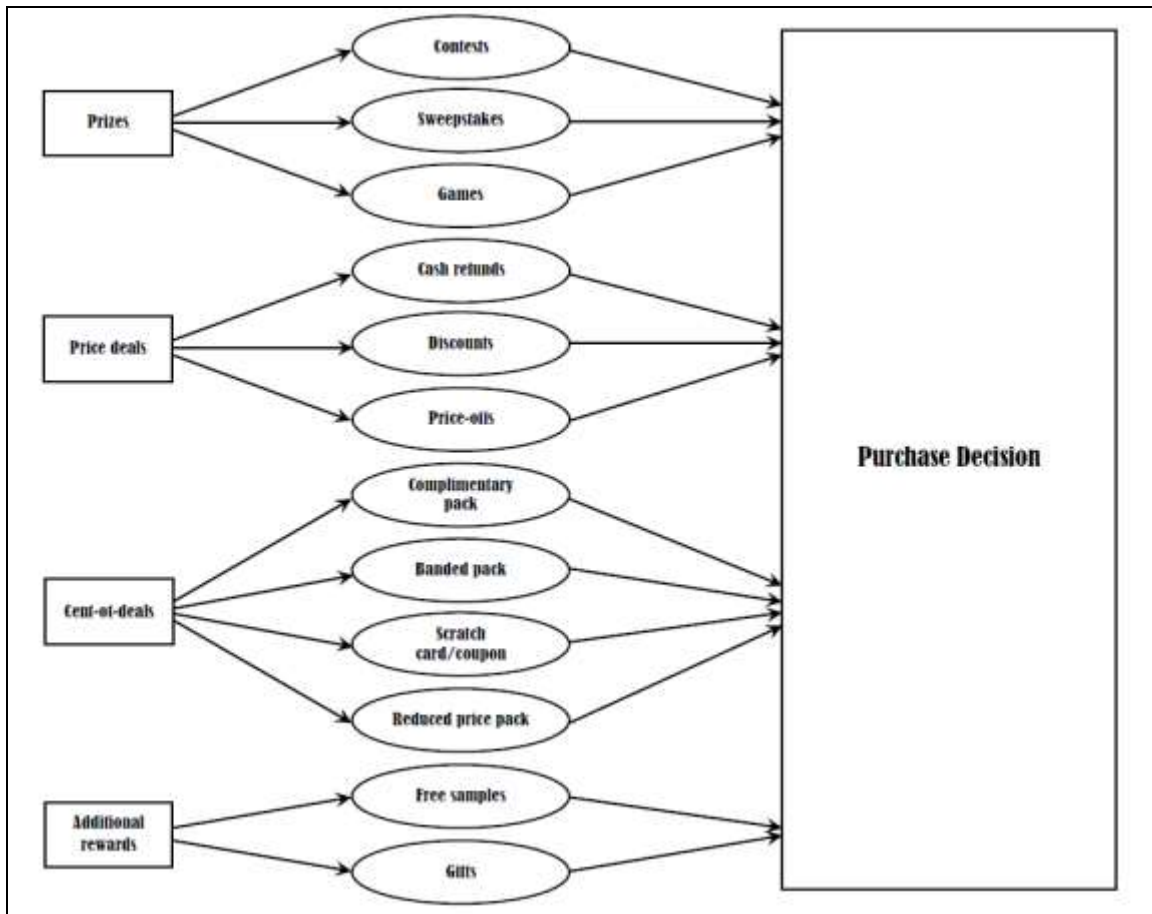
The decisions of sales promotions are affected by whether the company uses a "pull" or "push" strategy to achieve its objectives. It goes without saying that cooperation of resellers and channel members significantly influence these decisions.

The various tools of sales promotion used to persuade the consumers to stimulate the purchase have different levels of effect on the sales volume as the perceptions of consumers regarding the various sales promotional tools varies significantly. Therefore the design of the array of various sales promotional tools offered by the company need to match up with the objectives of sales promotional program. The promotion planner should also take into account the type of market, sales promotional objectives, competitive conditions, and each tools cost effectiveness .On the customers' end there are some factors which significantly affects the perception towards the sales promotional program offered by the company. It is imperative to say at this juncture that customers of different economic strata view sales promotional program offered by the company according to their own frame of reference. On one end the customers

inclined towards the downward end and even the middle of the social strata deems the sales promotional tools as an opportunity of being a smart shopper to enjoy some satisfaction by exploiting the alluring incentives. But on the other end of such continuum may not be much affected by such programs at least for low valued product.

There are various consumer promotion tools having their own distinctiveness which alone or in a combination aims at satisfying the sales objectives or marketing objectives of the company. Consumer promotional tools are discriminated objectively between manufacturers' promotion and retailer promotions. The former are typified as auto industry's frequent use of rebated, gifts to motivate test drives and purchases and high value trade in credit. The latter include price

cuts, feature advertisings, retailer coupons, retailer contests and premiums. An additional distinction can be made between sales promotion tools that are "consumer-franchise building ", which reinforces the consumers brand preference, and those that are not. The former impart a selling message along with the deal as in the case of free samples, frequency awards, coupons when they include a selling message and premiums when they are related with the product. Sales promotion tools that do not fall in this category includes price-off packs, contests and sweepstake, consumer refund awards and trade allowances. Each of these consumer promotional tools are perceived differently by the consumer, each of these vary in their comparative enormity and impinge on the purchase decision in different magnitudes. Broadly the consumer sales promotional tools can be classified into four distinct heads.



5. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To understand the perception of consumers on sales promotion tools at the time of making purchase decision.

Methodology of the study:

The data were collected for the study by means of questionnaire. Questionnaire was framed to obtain the consumer perceptions on various sales promotion tools and the influence of sales promotion tools on purchase decision process.

- **Research design:**

A research design provides the framework to be used as a guide in collecting and analyzing data. For this study the researchers have used **Descriptive Research** and the type of research design is **Cross-sectional**. Cross-Sectional design is a one-shot research study at a given point of time, and consists of a sample (cross-section) of the population of interest.

- **Sources of data:**

- **Primary data:** The primary data has been collected for the study through a pre-tested questionnaire. The sampling method the researchers have used is proportionate random sampling and the respondents will be extracted from the Kolkata.
- **Secondary data:** Secondary data are those which will be collected from doctoral theses, magazines, research articles, credible sources etc. Researchers have collected information from different sources to conduct the study effectively.

- **Sampling plan:**

Samples are always subsets or small part of total number that can be studied. It is a portion selected from population/universe which should have same features as that of population. In this study researchers have collected the samples from the consumers of Kolkata.

- **Area of research:** The study will be confined to Kolkata only due to its urban characteristics.
- **Sampling size & design:** Though the study area is Kolkata only, a convenience sampling method has been used to collect various perceptions of consumers from different domains. In total 270 samples have been collected & out of that 200 responses have been collected.
- **Questionnaire design:** A simple, easy to understand questionnaire consisting of **close ended** questions has been used for data collection from rural subscribers.
- **Tools for analysis:**

After collecting the data through questionnaire, the data were entered in SPSS version 21 to conduct the Factor Analysis & after that Multiple Regression Model has been applied to find out the suitable result.
- **Hypotheses of the study:**
 - There is no significant relationship between price deals & perception of consumers on sales promotion tools
 - There is no significant relationship between prizes & perception of consumers on sales promotion tools
 - There is no significant relationship between cents off deals & perception of consumers on sales promotion tools
 - There is no significant relationship

between additional rewards & perception of consumers on sales promotion tools

6. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Validity & Reliability:

The construct validity contains convergent & discriminant validity. Here between the various variables of the factors is having the strong co-relation coefficient & most of the co-relation coefficients values are in higher ranges. So, here it proves that the convergent validity exists. Though there are high co-relation coefficients between the variables of a particular factor, there are very weak correlation also exists between the one factor's variable to another factor's variable. Here it also proves that the discriminant validity exists.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.867	12

The reliability analysis on awareness level data has got the Cronbach's Alpha result of .867. From the table, we've depicted that this Cronbach's Alpha result acceptable & accordingly we have conducted the further

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.848
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1182.370
	df	66
	Sig.	.000

analysis.

Factor Analysis:

The analysis started by the researcher with the help of Factor Analysis to find out the influence of celebrity endorsements at the time of making a purchase decision. The KMO & Bartlett's Test is providing a very good result to start the further analysis. KMO measure of sampling adequacy is providing the value of 0.848, which is on a very higher side. It also implies that the samples are adequate. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also explains that the significance level is .000, which is quite significant.

Table 3: Total Variance Explained

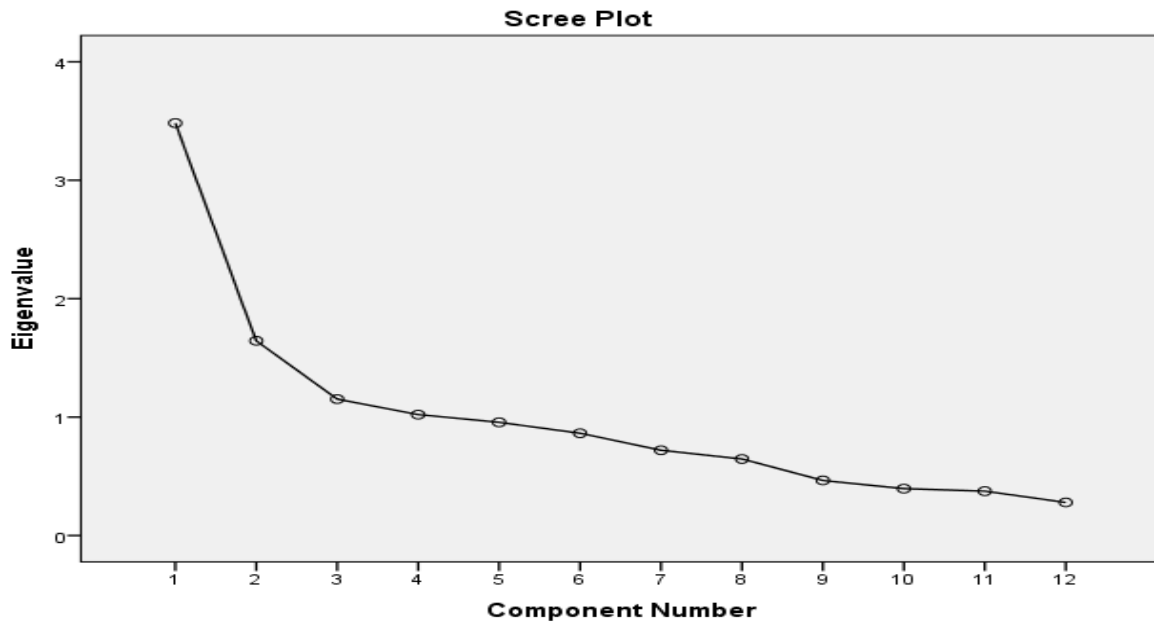
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.483	29.022	29.022	3.483	29.022	29.022	3.019	25.157	25.157
2	1.644	13.701	42.723	1.644	13.701	42.723	1.640	13.664	38.821
3	1.152	9.598	52.321	1.152	9.598	52.321	1.614	13.449	52.271
4	1.021	8.509	60.830	1.021	8.509	60.830	1.027	8.559	60.830

5	.956	7.966	68.796					
6	.864	7.197	75.993					
7	.720	5.999	81.992					
8	.646	5.385	87.376					
9	.465	3.877	91.253					
10	.396	3.298	94.551					
11	.375	3.121	97.673					
12	.279	2.327	100.000					

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

According to the table the first four components have found more than 1 Eigen values and the total variance table iterates that cumulatively 60.830% of total variance has been explained by

all the four components. Here the 1st component explains 25.157% of total variation where the 2nd, 3rd & 4th component explains 13.664%, 13.449% & 8.559% of total variation.



The four components have been selected to conduct the further research because all the four values are having Eigen Value of more than 1.

These components have been shown diagrammatically with the help of Scree plot.

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Contests	.809			
Sweepstakes	.777			
Games	.735			
Cash Refunds		.892		
Discounts		.868		
Price-off		.765		
Complementary Pack			.855	
Banded Pack			.790	
Coupons			.767	
Reduced Price Pack			.689	
Free Samples				.981
Gift				.889
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.				

From the above table it has been observed that all the 12 variables have been divided in 4 components. Here we have used the Principal Component Analysis for extraction & Varimax with Kaiser Normalization for rotation method. Rotated Component Matrix table explains that from the 1st component which is based on the factor related to Prizes, all the respondents believe that the “contests” is the most important variable in the above mentioned factor. The coefficient value of “contests” is 0.809 whereas “sweepstakes” is having a coefficient value of 0.777. The last variable named “Games” is having a coefficient value of 0.735. The 2nd component explains about the Price deals where “cash refunds” is having a highest coefficient value with .892. The other variables named “discounts” carrying the coefficient value of

.868 & “price off” is having the coefficient value of .765. The 3rd component explains about the Cents off deals. Here it is evident from the research that respondents have mostly responded to the attribute named “complementary pack” with the coefficient value of .855. Respondents have also rated other attributes namely “banded pack”, “coupons” & “reduced price packs” with the coefficient values of .790, .767 & .689. The 4th component explains about the additional rewards. The most influencing variable according to the respondents is “free samples” with a coefficient value of .981 & the next most influencing variable is “gifts” with a coefficient value of .889.

Herewith from the above table we have found that the most important attributes according to the respondents from all the four components are

“contests”, “cash refunds”, “complementary pack” & “free samples”.

Here the researchers have found four factors namely Prizes, Price deals, Cents off deals & additional rewards. To find out the most important factor & develop a model the researcher has used multiple regression analysis

& from this the researcher has implemented a Multiple Regression Model.

Regression Analysis:

Here the “perception of consumers on sales promotion tools on making purchase decision” has been used as a Dependent Variable and the remaining four factors namely Prizes, Price deals, Cents off deals & additional rewards has been used as Independent variables

Table 5: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.851 ^a	.724	.718	4.991	2.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), Prizes, Price deals, Cents off deals, Additional rewards

b. Dependent Variable: Perception of consumers on sales promotion tools

Table 6: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	246.196	4	811.549	72.731	.000 ^b
	Residual	838.444	195	24.907		
	Total	7084.640	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Perception of consumers on sales promotion tools

b. Predictors: (Constant), Prizes, Price deals, Cents off deals, Additional rewards

Table 7: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	7.520	1.248		22.058	.000		

Price deals	2.116	.287	.282	7.384	.000	.997	1.003
Prizes	.926	.204	.173	4.534	.000	.997	1.003
Cents off deals	1.193	.223	.205	5.352	.000	.995	1.005
Additional rewards	3.137	.220	.545	14.238	.000	.996	1.004

a. Dependent Variable: Perception of consumers on sales promotion tools

Multi-collinearity has been checked through Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) which needs to be less than 3 for acceptability range. Here all VIF values are in acceptable range in & it concludes that the variables are free from multi-collinearity.

0.851 is the Correlation coefficient (R) for Model 1, it emphasizes an amount of correlation between the independent variables and dependent variable (Influence of Celebrity Endorsements Score). The R square value explains the 0.724 or 72.4% which is quite significant. Here the significance level also implies .000 significance level which means it is quite acceptable.

From the coefficient table we have found that “Additional rewards” is having highest unstandardized coefficient of 3.197. So it is the highest influencing attribute in the study. After that the second highest is “Price deals” with the unstandardized ‘B’ value of 2.116. “Cents off deals” with value of 1.193 is the 3rd most preferred attribute & “Prizes” with 0.926 has become the least preferred attribute according to the respondents. The significance levels in all the cases are .000 which is less than the threshold value of 0.05 & it also confirms that it is quite significant.

So, here the multiple regression equation can be expressed as,

Perception of consumers on sales promotion tools = 7.520 + (2.116) Price deals + (0.926) Prizes + (1.193) Cents off deals + (3.137) Additional rewards.

Result of hypotehsis:

H₀₁ – There is no significant relationship between price deals & perception of consumers on sales promotion tools

H_{A1} – There is a significant relationship between price deals & perception of consumers on sales promotion tools

Here it rejects the null hypothesis & accepts the alternate hypothesis

H₀₂ – There is no significant relationship between prizes & perception of consumers on sales promotion tools

H_{A2} – There is a significant relationship between prizes & perception of consumers on sales promotion tools

Here it rejects the null hypothesis & accepts the alternate hypothesis

H₀₃ – There is no significant relationship between cents off deals & perception of consumers on sales promotion tools

H_{A3} – There is a significant relationship between cents off deals & perception of consumers on sales promotion tools

Here it rejects the null hypothesis & accepts the alternate hypothesis

H₀₄ – There is no significant relationship between additional rewards & perception of consumers on sales promotion tools

H_{A4} – There is a significant relationship between additional rewards & perception of consumers on sales promotion tools

Here it rejects the null hypothesis & accepts the alternate hypothesis

Findings & suggestions:

- The sales promotion tools plays significant role on consumers purchase decision.
- The respondents are mostly influenced by free samples further followed by contests, complementary pack & cash refunds.
- The respondents are also influenced by all the factors but especially on additional rewards and after that price deals, cents off deals & prizes have been arranged accordingly.
- The marketers should focus on reframing of the above tools for stimulating purchase decision.

Limitations of the study:

- The study has been confined to Kolkata only.
- The study has been limited to the purchase behavior only.
- Sample size of 200 is small; increasing the sample size can give other results also.

7. CONCLUSION

From findings of the study it can be said that the promotional tools are significant to the perception of the customers in making their purchase decision. It has been observed that additional rewards has the highest level of significance in the consumers' perception and can be considered as the active tool of sales promotion that influences making of customer buying decision. Since the survey was conducted for Kolkata area only and the number of respondents is limited to 200.

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