Building brand impact around cultural and seasonal buying trends

Whitepaper

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#GTBharat
SHAPING VIBRANT INDIA

Contents

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Introduction

India's rich cultural traditions play a significant role in driving consumer spending during festive seasons. Festivals such as Diwali, Dussehra, Navratri, Eid, and Christmas transform markets into vibrant hubs of economic activities. The festive season typically sees a significant surge in consumer activity, with heightened spending on shopping, gifting, and travel. Shoppers actively purchase a wide range of products, from apparel and electronics to automobiles and gold. Gifting and festive purchases have become integral to this period, with consumers increasingly planning higher expenditures year after year, thereby providing a substantial boost to the economy.

Businesses capitalise on this heightened sentiment by launching special offers, discounts, and festive marketing campaigns. The rise of digital payments and e-commerce platforms has also amplified spending patterns. **UPI transaction value reached INR 23,24,700 crore (approx.) in December 2024**, which showcases evolving consumer behaviour towards a digitalised country.[1]

Festivals are not just cultural celebrations; they are economic catalysts. Consumers are more open to discretionary spending, experimentation, and premium purchases during this time. The festive season is a golden window for D2C brands to tap into high-intent purchase behaviour, build recall, and onboard new, otherwise less experimental customers.

1.1

Increased consumer sentiment and willingness to spend

Festivals act as a driver of consumer sentiment. As per a latest survey report, India was ranked third in a list of 29 nations in consumer sentiment[2] in 2025, highlighting the nation's strong purchasing confidence, despite occasional fluctuations.

A compelling example of this heightened spending enthusiasm due to emotional connection is the record-breaking sales of INR 2.01 crore on Gandhi Jayanti 2024.[3] According to a survey conducted in 2024, more than 36% of respondents planned to spend more during the upcoming festive season compared to the previous year in India.

Consumers often view festivals as an opportunity to:

- Upgrade their lifestyle
- Invest in premium products
- Fulfil long-held desires, leading to increased expenditure on different categories like fashion, electronics, jewellery, and automobiles.

Moreover, gifting remains a key driver, with people prioritising purchases that strengthen relationships and express gratitude. Brands leverage this festive sentiment by offering exclusive discounts, limited-time collections, and nostalgia-driven marketing strategies that evoke a sense of tradition and belonging.

1.2

Impact of festivals on sales and brand engagement

During 2020, festival seasons led to an increase in sales for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) from 700% to 900%[4], specifically in agro-product sales, during Diwali. Further, certain MSME outlets recorded daily sales exceeding INR 1 crore multiple times during peak festive months.[5]

Consumers prefer a blend of digital and offline shopping channels even for the festive season. Major e-commerce platforms also offer massive discounts under the Amazon Great Indian Festival Sales and Flipkart Big Billion Days, resulting in over one billion visitors for the event and sales growth, primarily fuelled by tier 2 and tier 3 cities.

These surges are a short-term boost and foster long-term brand engagement. Beyond immediate revenue spikes, festivals also play a crucial role in brand engagement. Consumers are

more receptive to marketing campaigns, making it an ideal time for businesses to strengthen their brand identity and brand messaging. Businesses utilise this opportunity to create deeper connections through personalised marketing, influencer collaborations, and exclusive festive editions.

[1] UPI transactions in India | PIB
[2] https://www.ipsos.com/en-in/india-ranks-3rd-consumer-sentiment-among-29-nations-despite-consumer-sentiment-weakening-february
[3] Gandhi Jayanti Khadi | PIB
[4] India: festive shopping spending plan 2024 | Statista
[5] Gandhi Jayanti Khadi | PIB

1.3

Role of cultural sentiments and heightened brand engagement during festivals

Campaigns that align with cultural values (like family bonding, gratitude, and togetherness) tend to perform better, primarily when personalised or localised. Brands participating in the celebration not just the sale, win trust and loyalty. Cultural relevance is the new creative currency.

Brands that align themselves with consumers' cultural values successfully forge stronger connections with consumers, enhancing brand loyalty and long-term engagement.

One of the key factors influencing consumer decisions during festive seasons is the sense of **nostalgia and heritage associated with celebrations.** For instance, storytelling-based advertisements that emphasise familial ties and cultural heritage resonate deeply, influencing purchase decisions in favour of brands that align with these themes.

Case study: A leading confectionary brand in India

A leading confectionery brand has played a crucial role in shaping how modern-day Diwali celebrations unfold. Over the years, it has skilfully balanced tradition with contemporary values, making its products synonymous with love, joy, and togetherness. Through carefully crafted campaigns, this brand has not only boosted sales during festive seasons but also strengthened its emotional connection with consumers.

Emotional storytelling and family bonding: Its campaigns emphasise relationships and shared moments, portraying heartfelt exchanges between family and friends. By positioning its products as symbols of love and togetherness, the brand has become integral to festive gifting

Nostalgia and lasting impact: By evoking memories of childhood celebrations and family reunions, the brand fosters deep emotional connections, solidifying its role in India's festive traditions beyond just a product.

Balancing tradition and modernity: Depicting traditional rituals in contemporary settings, the brand bridges generational gaps, keeping its messaging relevant while honouring cultural heritage.

1.4

Impact of festive season

The festive season in India plays a crucial role in driving economic activity, boosting employment, and influencing consumer spending patterns. From increased job creation to rising salaries across key sectors, the festive period witnesses significant economic momentum. Retail, e-commerce, and automobile manufacturing industries experience a surge in demand, while tax revenues reflect heightened business activity.

Salary trends[6]

The festive quarter often coincides with appraisals and bonus cycles across industries, leading to noticeable changes in salary structures. Sectors witnessing high seasonal demand or rapid post-pandemic recovery tend to show the strongest hikes.

Overall industry	Infrastructure, Facility management and IT sector	Retail and quick service restaurants sector
3.25% increase (FY22)	30% salary hike (FY23)	7% salary increase (FY23)

E-commerce boom[7]

India's digital commerce landscape significantly surges during the festive season, driven by aggressive discounting, flash sales, and increased consumer spending. Online platforms capitalise on this window to reach wider audiences, particularly in tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

| Sales	Shoppers	Expenditure per shopper
Increase by 27% YoY (reaching USD 5.7 billion)	24% YoY (65% from tier-2 cities) Total: 80 million shoppers	Increase by 3% YoY

Retail growth and automobile industry performance

The festive season traditionally marks a peak in big-ticket purchases, including retail and automobiles. Strong consumer sentiment, new model launches, and festive offers combine to boost sales in these sectors, reflecting broader economic optimism.

Retail sales[8]	Automobile performance[9]
Increased by 6% YoY (2024)	Increased by 18.49% to 393,094 units (2023)

UPI transactions

The festive season in India spans from October to December, that mark a surge in consumer spending. One of the most significant indicators of this heightened economic activity is the sharp rise in UPI transactions, as consumers increasingly prefer digital payment modes[10] for their festive purchases and gifting needs. For instance, UPI payments during the festive quarter of 2024 rose by 29% YoY from 2023. This growth highlights a rising consumer preference for digital payment modes and underlines the digital economy's expanding role in India's festive consumption trends.[11]

Growth rate: 29%

5278458 — 2023 (Oct to Dec)
6829709 — 2024 (Oct to Dec)

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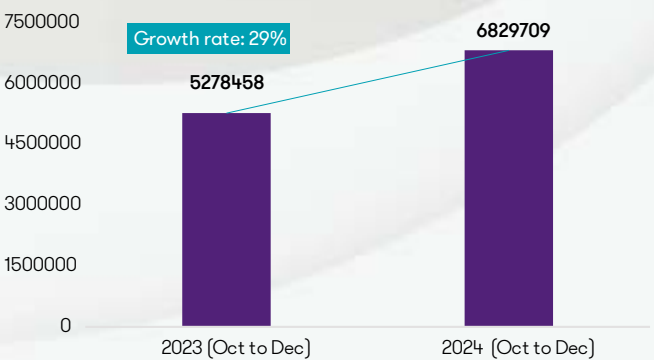
[6] Salary hike | MoEA
[7] E-commerce boom | MoEA
[8] Retail sales | MoEA
[9] Automobile performance | MoEA
[10] Preferred Mode of Payment in Festive Season
[11] UPI transactions in value | NPCI

02

Understanding consumer behaviour during festive seasons

According to a Kantar study, **74% of Indian shoppers** associate festive spending with **"celebrating relationships"** and **"spreading happiness,"** rather than need-based buying. This emotional connection drives a noticeable shift in consumer behaviour during the festive season. Shoppers tend to ramp up their spending, focus on gifting, and actively hunt for deals and discounts, often making purchases driven by emotion or impulse.

Brand loyalty tends to take a backseat as consumers explore new products and experiences, making this a prime opportunity for emerging brands to capture attention. Additionally, digital engagement surges during this period, with consumers relying heavily on online platforms for inspiration, convenience, and last-minute shopping.

Understanding these behavioural shifts is crucial for brands aiming to craft timely, relevant, and effective marketing strategies that resonate with festive sentiments and maximize impact.

2.1

Influence of various mediums on consumers

Multiple mediums shape consumer behaviour, each playing a distinct role in influencing purchasing decisions. With evolving technology and changing lifestyles, brands strategically leverage different platforms to maximise their reach and impact. As per a survey in 2023, 56% of the respondents indicated their willingness to spend on festive items.[12]

Television and print advertising
Television and print media remain powerful tools for brand awareness, particularly during festive seasons when consumer spending surges. Television commercials create a strong emotional connection through storytelling, while newspapers and magazines provide credibility and reach a broad audience. Promotional campaigns, festive discounts, and celebrity endorsements in these mediums enhance recall value and influence purchasing intent.

Social media and influencer marketing
With the rise of digital consumption, social media platforms are pivotal in shaping consumer choices. Brands collaborate with influencers and content creators to create authentic engagements, leveraging their followers' trust. Short-form videos, interactive polls, and live shopping events on social media drive higher engagement, making it an essential channel for festive promotions.

E-commerce and personalised promotions
Online shopping platforms offer convenience and personalised shopping experiences through AI-driven recommendations, limited-time offers, and exclusive festive deals. Flash sales, bundle offers, and early-access promotions drive urgency and conversions. E-commerce brands also leverage data analytics to provide hyper-personalised discounts, enhancing customer retention.

Out-of-home (OOH) advertising
Billboards, transit ads, digital screens, and point-of-sale displays create strong brand visibility in high-traffic areas. During festive seasons, OOH advertising capitalises on high footfall in malls, shopping districts, and public spaces, reinforcing brand messaging. Dynamic digital billboards and AR-powered experiences further enhance consumer interaction and engagement.

Experiential and retail activations
Brands engage consumers through interactive in-store experiences, pop-up events, and immersive activations. From festive-themed store decor to in-mall brand activations, these strategies create emotional connections and enhance product trial opportunities. Gamification, AR try-ons, and loyalty-based incentives further elevate consumer participation and brand recall

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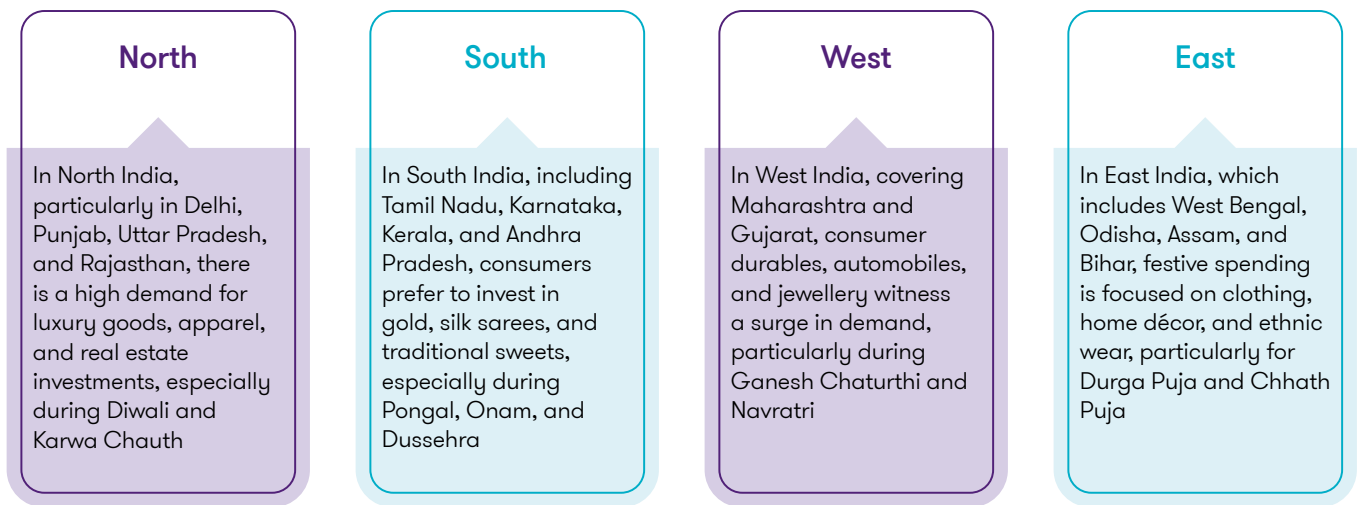[12] Readiness to purchase festive items | Ministry of External Affairs

2.2

Regional variations in festive shopping behaviour

India's diverse festive shopping behaviours make it essential for brands to adopt a region-specific marketing approach. Brands that customise their messaging, products, and promotional strategies to align with regional traditions can maximise consumer engagement and sales. By leveraging local insights, vernacular content, and cultural nuances, businesses can strengthen brand loyalty while effectively capturing the festive shopping market across India.

Regional preferences in product categories

Consumer preferences during the festive season vary widely based on region and cultural significance.

North	South	West	East
In North India, particularly in Delhi, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan, there is a high demand for luxury goods, apparel, and real estate investments, especially during Diwali and Karwa Chauth	In South India, including Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh, consumers prefer to invest in gold, silk sarees, and traditional sweets, especially during Pongal, Onam, and Dussehra	In West India, covering Maharashtra and Gujarat, consumer durables, automobiles, and jewellery witness a surge in demand, particularly during Ganesh Chaturthi and Navratri	In East India, which includes West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, and Bihar, festive spending is focused on clothing, home décor, and ethnic wear, particularly for Durga Puja and Chhath Puja

Importance of localised digital marketing

With an increase in digital penetration in India, brands are increasingly using **hyper-local influencer marketing**, **vernacular content**, and **region-specific advertisements** to engage consumers.

E-commerce giants too customise their festival sales by featuring region-specific offers, personalised notifications, and advertisements in local languages. This strategy ensures that their marketing resonates with consumers across different regions.

Brands have found that regional marketing campaigns often yield better ROI because they align with local sentiments and consumer preferences. Jewellery brands often strategically allocate their advertising funds based on regional demand insights, ensuring higher engagement and increased sales. By investing in regional marketing, brands can enhance their relevance and maximise their impact during the festive season.

Rise of the tier-2 shopper

Festive consumption is no longer metro-centric. Tier-2 and Tier-3 towns are leading growth in festive e-commerce, driven by rising incomes, mobile internet, and aspiration-led shopping. Regional festivals like Onam, Bihu, or Navratri also present localised brand opportunities.

60% of new D2C customers during Diwali 2023 came from non-metro cities

Regional language content and localised campaigns saw up to **3× engagement**

COD (Cash on delivery) and WhatsApp commerce are still preferred in semi-urban areas

2.3

Persona mapping: Key festive season consumer archetypes

Personas

Urban gifter

Description

Young professional buying gifts for friends, family, or colleagues

Buying traits

Seeks personalisation, premium packaging, quick delivery

Personas

Festive upgrader

Description

Homemaker or family shopper upgrading home or wardrobe

Buying traits

Buys appliances, ethnic wear, home decor; looks for bundles

Personas

Gen Z impulse buyer

Description

Trend-savvy, usually influenced by Instagram and creators

Buying traits

Buys limited drops, skincare, fashion; prefers UPI, one-click checkouts

Personas

Bharat aspirer

Description

First-time shopper from tier-2/3 city

Buying traits

Seeks value, COD, mobile-friendly UI, festive language cues

03

Key strategies for festive brand promotion

The festive season presents more than just a spike in sales—it's a strategic moment for brands to deepen consumer connections, onboard new audiences, and strengthen market presence. High-performing D2C brands leverage layered approaches that integrate compelling storytelling, optimised channel strategies, influencer collaborations, and robust operational planning.

To truly stand out during this competitive period, brands must strike the right balance between creativity, cultural resonance, and precise timing. Campaigns that tap into consumer emotions, align with festive sentiment, and use data-driven targeting are far more likely to capture attention and drive meaningful engagement.

3.1

Start early: Pre-festive brand warm-up

Starting early is one of the most overlooked yet powerful strategies for festive success. Brands that begin engaging their audience **4–6 weeks ahead** of the peak festive days enjoy significantly higher recall, better ad efficiency, and stronger conversion momentum. The early window is ideal for warming up audiences, seeding excitement, and nurturing high-intent prospects.

82% of shoppers begin browsing festive products more than 3 weeks before Diwali

Brands that engaged customers during this early window saw **20%** higher conversion rates during the actual sale period

Why timing matters

Consumers don't wait until Diwali or Christmas week to begin their festive shopping. The search for products, gift ideas, and deals typically starts weeks in advance, and early entrants enjoy a "first-mover" advantage—both in mindshare and wallet share.

Key tactics to activate the pre-festive window:

Festive teasers and wishlist campaigns:

- Launch soft teaser campaigns showcasing glimpses of your upcoming festive collection.
- Introduce a "Wishlist" or "notify me" feature where users can express interest early and receive early access offers.
- Use WhatsApp and email marketing to build anticipation with messages like "Something Festive is Coming."

Early-bird access and VIP lists:

- Create exclusive waitlists or early access groups for loyal customers, offering them first right on festive drops. This creates urgency and makes your best customers feel valued—driving early momentum and word-of-mouth.

Influencer-driven sneak peeks:

- Partner with creators to subtly introduce your festive vibe or product narrative via "what I'm gifting," or "my festive mood board" type content. This builds a community narrative around your campaign before it even officially launches.

Festive landing pages and SEO strategy:

- Create themed landing pages optimised with keywords such as "Diwali gifts," "Christmas hampers," "festive beauty kits," etc.
- Ranking high on Google searches during the early festive discovery phase can drive free organic traffic.

3.2

Personalised marketing campaigns

Personalised marketing campaigns leverage customer data to deliver tailored experiences by identifying patterns to more effectively target potential customers, making the festive season more engaging. Such campaigns go beyond generic advertising and focus on individual customer preferences, behaviours, and past interactions. Personalised marketing works for festive promotions for the following reasons:

- **Higher engagement and click-through rates:** Personalised festive emails, SMS, and app notifications perform better than mass campaigns, as customers are more likely to open a message that directly addresses them and offers something relevant.

- **Works across multiple channels:** Festive personalised marketing can be applied across different platforms, including emails, social media, WhatsApp, SMS, mobile apps, and websites, ensuring a seamless experience.

Strategies for personalised festive marketing	
Data-driven customer segmentation	• Behaviour-based segmentation - Segment customers based on their purchase history, browsing behaviour, and preferences. • Demographic segmentation - Personalise offers based on age, location, and interests. • Psychographic segmentation - Use insights such as shopping habits, values, and festive preferences to tailor campaigns.
Personalised e-mail and SMS campaigns	• Name personalisation • Custom offers - Recommend products based on past purchases. • Festive greetings • Abandoned cart reminders
AI-powered product recommendations	• Use AI and machine learning to analyse shopping behaviours and suggest relevant festive products. • AI-driven chatbots can provide personalised shopping assistance, festive gift suggestions, and instant support.
Social media personalisation	• Use of targeted ads to show relevant festive deals based on browsing history.

3.3

Exclusive festive discounts and offers

Since festivals are peak shopping time, brands offering exclusive festive discounts and deals can capture high consumer interest. These promotions create urgency, drive sales, and boost brand loyalty while also capitalising on the festive shopping spirit. Festive discounts and offers can work for the following reasons:

- **Encourages impulse buying:** Limited-time festive deals push customers to make quicker decisions.

- **Creates a sense of exclusivity:** Special festive discounts make customers feel valued.

- **Increases customer acquisition:** First-time buyers are more likely to purchase when offered attractive festive deals.

- **Boosts customer retention:** Exclusive festive rewards strengthen brand loyalty and encourage repeat purchases.

- **Generates higher sales volume:** Bulk buying during festivals increases revenue and clears inventory.

Strategies for personalised festive marketing		
Limited-time festive discounts or Buy one, get one (BOGO)	Early bird discounts or popular deals	Festive combo deals and bundled offers
Free festive gift with purchase	Personalised festive discounts	Buy more, save more offers

3.4

Social media and digital engagement

Social media and digital engagement are essential strategies for festive brand promotions, allowing businesses to connect with a broad audience and create excitement around their offerings. Festivals evoke emotions, and digital platforms provide the perfect space for brands to tap into these sentiments through festive-themed content, influencer collaborations, and interactive campaigns.

Interactive engagement strategies, such as contests, giveaways, and live shopping events, further amplify customer participation. Influencer partnerships add credibility and widen the reach, while personalised digital ads ensure that the right products reach the right audience. WhatsApp marketing and chatbots help brands maintain direct customer communication, offering festive discounts and exclusive deals. Augmented reality (AR) features, such as virtual try-ons, enhance the shopping experience, making digital interactions more immersive and engaging.

Festive social media strategies

Festive hashtags: Create a branded hashtag for your campaign and encourage users to share their festive moments with your products.

Festive stories and reels: Use Instagram and Facebook stories and reels to showcase festive collections, behind-the-scenes content, or special offers.

3.5

Omnichannel approach

With increased customer engagement across multiple offline and online platforms, brands create a unified and personalised shopping experience that enhances customer satisfaction and drives sales. An effective omnichannel approach during festive seasons ensures consistency, convenience, and maximum reach, leading to increased brand loyalty and revenue.

- **Seamless integration across channels:** Consumers interact with brands through various touchpoints, including physical stores, e-commerce platforms, social media, e-mail, and mobile apps. During festive seasons, integrating these channels ensures a frictionless shopping experience.

- **Personalised festive messaging:** A data-driven approach to personalisation enhances engagement. Further, sending custom messages with exclusive discount codes based on user preferences and behaviours also serves the purpose.

- **Festive content and social engagement:** This includes interactive social media campaigns, live streaming, and virtual shopping.

- **Customer journey mapping for festive shopping:** Understanding the consumer journey helps brands optimise their approach. This mainly involves using predictive analysis to forecast the demand for specific products based on past seasonal trends. Before this, it was essential to create customised festive buyer personas by segmenting customers based on their shopping habits on online platforms.

- **Testing and optimisation for maximum impact:** Continuous monitoring and optimisation help brands fine-tune their festive campaigns. Following are the key approaches for the same:

  - Using AI-powered analytics to monitor engagement, conversion rates, and sales impact.

  - A/B testing on ad creatives and messaging to determine the most effective combination and which is more appealing for the target audience.
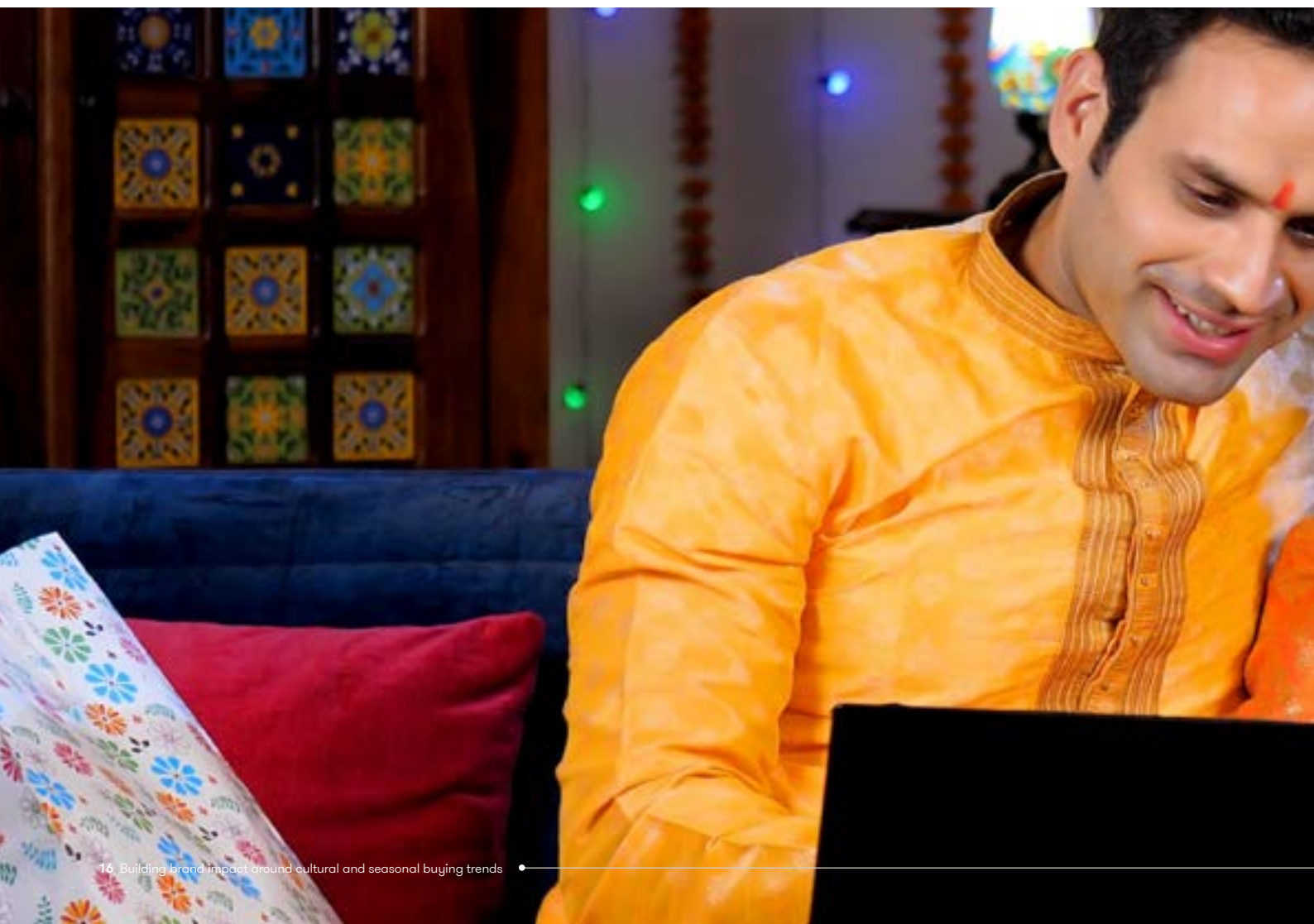
3.6
Sustainable and cause-driven marketing

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is integral to modern business strategies, reflecting an organisation's commitment to societal well-being.

Moreover, sustainability has become a core aspect of festive marketing. Businesses are adopting eco-friendly packaging, reducing carbon footprints, and promoting reusable or biodegradable products. Brands that focus on sustainability resonate more with environmentally conscious consumers.

Sustainability has emerged as a key pillar of festive marketing strategies in India. According to a News18 report, nearly 65% of consumers[13] now actively seek products with sustainable or minimal packaging, making eco-conscious branding more relevant than ever. Businesses are responding by adopting eco-friendly packaging, reducing carbon footprints, and promoting reusable or biodegradable products.

A Mintel study reveals that while 75% of Indian consumers recognize the importance of protecting the environment, only a fraction consistently acts on it, highlighting a gap between awareness and behaviour[14]. However, younger, urban consumers, especially women aged 18–34, are increasingly part of an eco-engaged cohort willing to pay a premium for sustainable products. Notably, 36% of Indian consumers consider non-plastic packaging to be the most eco-friendly, surpassing recyclable options[15].

For brands, aligning festive campaigns with sustainability not only appeals to environmentally conscious shoppers but also enhances brand credibility and long-term loyalty. By integrating green messaging, showcasing ethical sourcing, and offering sustainable gifting options, brands can resonate more deeply with evolving consumer values during the festive season.

A leading Indian e-commerce giant's festive hiring initiative

As part of a festive season strategy, the e-commerce giant hired over 1 lakh temporary workers across supply chain, customer support, and logistics to meet increased demand. This initiative boosted employment and enhanced livelihoods, supporting thousands of families during the festival period.

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[13] Sustainable Festive Season: Embracing Eco-Friendly Choices in Festive Packaging
[14] Consumer perspectives on eco-friendly packaging: An Indian context
[15] Consumer perspectives on eco-friendly packaging: An Indian context

04

Case studies of successful festive campaigns

A leading detergent brand

A leading detergent brand, recognising the vibrant celebrations of Holi and focusing on vulnerable segments like the elderly, launched a heartwarming campaign aimed at reinforcing emotional bonds through the spirit of Holi. This Holi campaign served as a compelling example of how brands can go beyond product messaging to create meaningful societal impact. By focusing on emotional connections and inclusivity, the initiative not only reinforced the festival's spirit but also strengthened the brand's relationship with its consumers.

Campaign concept

The campaign, aligned with the brand's long-standing philosophy of 'Stains are good,' aimed to demonstrate how meaningful gestures can bring people closer. The central theme revolved around using Holi colours as a medium to bridge emotional distances, emphasising that true celebration lies in inclusion and empathy.

Impact

The campaign successfully resonated with audiences by highlighting an emotional yet relatable narrative. It reinforced the idea that small, thoughtful acts can strengthen relationships, especially in times of social limitations. By leveraging a child's innocence and creativity, the advertisement effectively communicated the brand's philosophy of promoting kindness through action.

Key takeaways from the campaign

1. **Emotional storytelling:** The campaign used a simple yet impactful story to evoke emotions, ensuring high audience engagement.

2. **Inclusivity and empathy:** The narrative emphasised the importance of including the elderly and vulnerable sections in celebrations.

3. **Brand alignment:** The message seamlessly integrated with the brand's existing positioning of encouraging positive actions despite getting dirty.

4. Cultural relevance: By leveraging a widely celebrated festival, the campaign connected deeply with consumers' traditions and emotions.

Global beverage giant's initiative

A leading beverage brand launched a heartwarming campaign to encourage people to celebrate Diwali in person and bring back the magic of social connections. The campaign launched by the brand was executed as a 360-degree initiative, leveraging television, digital platforms, and innovative product experiences to maximise reach and engagement. It served as a compelling example of how brands can leverage cultural moments to drive meaningful consumer engagement. By encouraging in-person interactions during Diwali, the initiative successfully strengthened emotional connections while enhancing brand affinity.

Campaign concept

The campaign was designed to reinforce the brand's philosophy of fostering real human connections. It urged people to go beyond digital interactions and physically meet their friends and family during the festive season. The core message focused on rekindling relationships and cherishing shared moments, aligning with the brand's commitment to spreading happiness.

Impact

The campaign struck an emotional chord with audiences, resonating with the widespread desire to reconnect after prolonged social distancing. By positioning its beverage as a symbol of togetherness, the brand reinforced its identity as a facilitator of meaningful moments. The initiative successfully encouraged consumers to prioritise in-person celebrations, resulting in strong brand recall and positive sentiment.

Key takeaways from the campaign

1. **Emotional appeal:** The campaign tapped into the universal longing for human connection, making it highly relatable.

2. **Cultural relevance:** By aligning with a widely celebrated festival, the message resonated deeply with Indian audiences.

3. **Multi-platform strategy:** The integration of television, digital, and product innovation ensured widespread engagement.

4. **Brand consistency:** The initiative seamlessly extended the brand's global philosophy of fostering shared experiences.

How a D2C audio-tech brand leveraged Diwali for explosive growth

About the brand

A fast-growing Indian D2C brand in the affordable audio and wearable tech category. Known for its youth-centric appeal, sleek design, and accessible pricing, the brand had built a strong digital presence and a loyal customer base among Gen Z and millennials.

Campaign overview: "#GiftSmartThisDiwali"

Objective

To position tech accessories (earphones, smartwatches, speakers) as modern, practical Diwali gifts that offer value, style, and everyday utility. The goal was to boost direct-to-consumer sales, increase brand engagement, and enhance repeat customer behaviour.

Core elements of the campaign:

1. **Modern gifting narrative:** The campaign challenged traditional Diwali gifting (like sweets and dry fruits), with the message: "Ditch the ordinary. Gift smart." It tapped into the consumer desire for thoughtful and useful gifting.

2. **Influencer-driven storytelling:** Partnered with over 100 digital creators across tech, fashion, and fitness to showcase how these products fit into daily Diwali moments — from puja prep to gifting family and friends.

3. **Original video content and web collaborations:** Branded content integrated in short festive web sketches and Instagram reels through tie-ups with youth entertainment pages, amplifying reach and relatability.

4. **UGC contest – #MySmartDiwaliGift:** Consumers were encouraged to share their unique gifting moments using the products, creating organic buzz and a bank of reusable content.

5. **Festive-themed packaging:** Products were shipped in Diwali-themed boxes with DIY diya stickers, personalised notes, and ready-to-gift kits — turning deliveries into experiences.

6. **Omnichannel activation strategy:**
   - D2C website: Flash sales, personalised landing pages, gamified discounts.
   - Marketplaces: Exclusive offers timed with Diwali sales on leading e-commerce platforms.
   - WhatsApp catalogs: Piloted catalog shopping for faster purchase decisions and gifting.
   - Vernacular creatives: Used Hindi, Tamil, and Bengali ads for regional targeting.

Key takeaways and lessons

1. Redefining gifting: The brand successfully repositioned utility tech as a modern festive gift, aligning functionality with emotional storytelling.

2. Influencer-led trust: Real-life demonstrations of product usage during festive moments created high relatability and trust.

3. Festive packaging adds value: Custom, thoughtful packaging eliminated the need for additional gift prep — enhancing convenience and perceived value.

4. Omnichannel synergy: Balanced D2C and marketplace push ensured reach and fulfilment efficiency.

5. Tier 2 and vernacular focus: Regional ads saw 20% higher CTR and boosted brand penetration in untapped markets.

Strategic insights for D2C brands

- Start early: Plan campaigns 6–8 weeks ahead of Diwali to build anticipation.
- Go emotional + functional: Combine heartwarming narratives with product utility.
- Make gifting frictionless: Festive bundles, quick checkout, and ready-to-gift packaging increase conversions.
- Leverage creators wisely: Choose influencers who reflect real consumer use cases.
- Track for repeat: Use Diwali as a springboard to trigger repeat purchases in the upcoming New Year season.

05

Challenges and considerations

Festive seasons present immense opportunities for brands to boost sales and engagement, but they also come with significant challenges. From managing supply chain disruptions to ensuring cultural sensitivity in campaigns, businesses must navigate several hurdles to maximise their returns effectively.

5.1
Managing supply chain disruptions during peak shopping periods

The surge in demand during festive seasons often leads to supply chain bottlenecks, affecting inventory management, order fulfilment, and delivery timelines. Increased consumer spending pressures manufacturers, logistics partners, and warehouses, leading to potential delays and stockouts. Inadequate planning can result in lost sales and dissatisfied customers.

Consideration:

- A robust demand forecasting model powered by AI/ML can better predict festive season spikes.

- Buffer inventory maintained at strategic locations helps absorb sudden demand surges.

- Real-time tracking of shipments through IoT-enabled logistics platforms ensures early identification of bottlenecks.

- Flexible warehousing arrangements, such as dark stores or temporary hubs, can accommodate overflow stock efficiently.

- Collaborations with last-mile delivery start-ups offer additional bandwidth during high-traffic periods.

5.2
Ensuring cultural sensitivity in campaigns

Festivals are deeply rooted in cultural and religious traditions, making it crucial for brands to approach their marketing campaigns sensitively. Missteps can lead to backlash, damaging brand reputation and customer trust.

A notable example is when a global personal care brand launched a campaign to celebrate diversity and challenge traditional beauty standards. The campaign aimed to showcase that beauty comes in all forms, reinforcing inclusivity and self-acceptance.

The controversy of the campaign was that in one advertisement, a black woman removed her top to reveal a white woman, who then transformed into an Asian woman, before the cycle repeated. While intended to represent diversity, the execution led to a different interpretation. Many viewers saw it as implying that darker skin needed to be "washed away" to reveal a fairer complexion, drawing comparisons to historically racist advertisements.

Consideration:

- The organisation's diverse cultural review board can help screen campaign content from multiple perspectives.

- Feedback from regionally representative focus groups provides insights into potential misinterpretations.

5.3
Differentiating in an oversaturated festive market

The festive market is crowded with promotions from both big and small brands, making it difficult to stand out. Consumers are bombarded with discounts, festive collections, and aggressive advertising, leading to promotional fatigue. Simply offering discounts may not be enough to capture attention.

Consideration:

- Personalised festive offerings based on customer data help brands stand out amid uniform promotions.

- Micro-influencers with niche but loyal followings can create more genuine popularity than broad campaigns.

- Brand stories centred around values or social impact provide emotional connection beyond discounts.

- Limited-edition products or festive packaging create a sense of exclusivity that drives urgency.

5.4
Balancing high marketing spend with ROI expectations

Festive marketing requires substantial investment in digital advertising, influencer collaborations, and promotional discounts. However, the Cost Per Impression (CPM) typically increases during the peak season, significantly impacting profit margins.

Additionally, high consumer engagement does not always translate into increased conversions, making it essential to justify marketing expenditures.

Consideration:

- A well-defined attribution model helps measure the effectiveness of different marketing channels.

- Retargeting campaigns directed at previous customers or website visitors offer higher conversion potential.

- Controlled A/B testing of creatives and messaging enables optimisation before large-scale deployment.

06
Future trends in festive marketing

As consumer expectations evolve, festive marketing strategies must adapt to provide more personalised, sustainable, and immersive experiences. Brands leveraging advanced technologies and responsible business practices will stand out in the competitive holiday season.

6.1

Personalisation through AI

Personalisation remains at the heart of effective festive marketing as discussed before. Consumers expect customised experiences that cater to their preferences, behaviours, and purchase history. AI-driven marketing enhances customer engagement and increases conversion rates by delivering tailored content and offers.

With dynamic social media platforms, AI can enhance brand content creation. AI can be implemented in the following ways:

- **Data analysis:** Using AI to process vast amounts of customer data, identifying patterns in shopping behaviour, interests, and engagement. This includes analysing:
  - Purchase history
  - Browing history
  - Social media interactions
  - Engagement with past marketing campaigns

  By identifying these patterns, brands can further segment customers and create precise, data-backed marketing strategies.

- **Real-time dynamic content:** AI allows brands to develop dynamic content that adjusts in real time based on customer interactions. This includes personalised e-mails and website experiences since AI customises homepages, product recommendations, and discounts based on individual browsing history.

- **Predictive analytics for festive shopping:** Predictive AI models analyse historical data to forecast what consumers will likely buy during the festive season. This means brands can offer personalised discounts, predict stock trends, and send proactive reminders for customers to complete their purchases.

- **Chatbots for queries:** AI chatbots can assist customers in real-time by answering FAQs, guiding them through gift selections, and processing orders.

- **AI-powered gift advisors:** Interactive chatbot-based quizzes help users find the perfect festive gift based on recipient preferences.

6.2

AR/virtual reality (VR) experiences for virtual product trials

Consumer attention spans are shorter than ever, and traditional marketing methods no longer create lasting impressions. Brands must invest in immersive and interactive marketing experiences to capture and retain consumer interest during the festive season.

AR technology enables customers to experience products before purchasing:

- Beauty and fashion: Virtual try-ons for makeup, jewellery, and apparel.

- Furniture and home decor: AR-powered apps that allow users to visualise furniture in their homes.

- Retail and e-commerce: AR-driven holiday shopping guides for selecting the perfect gifts.

VR technology allows brands to create immersive virtual shopping experiences, including:

- Virtual holiday store walkthroughs, replicating the in-store shopping experience online.

- Personalised VR gift recommendations, where customers can explore curated collections in a 3D space.

6.3

Compliance with data deletion obligations under the DPDP Act

In accordance with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, D2C brands operating in India are legally required to erase personal data once the purpose for which it was collected has been fulfilled and retention is no longer necessary for legal or business reasons. This provision reinforces the principle of data minimisation and mandates that brands implement robust data lifecycle management practices, especially during high-volume data collection periods, such as festive campaigns.

Conclusion

Festive brand promotion teaches that emotional resonance and community connection are just as important as commercial appeal. Consumers are more likely to engage with brands that understand the spirit of the season and align their values with cultural traditions. It is not just about flashy discounts; it is about storytelling, meaningful engagement, and building lasting relationships. Brands that humanise their campaigns, show genuine empathy, and contribute positively to social causes often leave a stronger impression. The festive season offers a rare chance to blend business with purpose, turning one-time buyers into loyal brand advocates.

1. With 65% of festive shoppers coming from non-metros, the trend is clear: India's next billion consumers are not just from the urban elite but the aspiring middle class in smaller towns. These consumers are brand-aware, value-conscious, and heavily influenced by digital marketing. This shift forces brands to rethink one-size-fits-all advertising and adopt regional, price-sensitive, and trust-building strategies.

2. People switch brands easily based on discounts, packaging, or emotional messaging, meaning brand loyalty is more vulnerable during the festive period. It is a time when consumers experiment, giving brands an opportunity to win new market share, but also at the high risk of churn if they don't stay competitive.

3. The 900% surge in MSME sales during Diwali underlines how the festive economy doesn't just benefit large retailers, it distributes prosperity down the chain. It also reveals how digitisation, logistics enablement, and vernacular outreach have empowered small sellers to tap into demand at scale.

4. What's considered a "festive purchase" differs widely, gold in Tamil Nadu, automobiles in Gujarat, apparel in West Bengal, etc. This shows that the Indian market changes a lot as per seasonal spikes. One national campaign won't work, brands need hyperlocal relevance.

5. Personalised marketing builds emotional resonance with customers, especially during festivals, which are emotionally and culturally significant. Tailored messages based on customer preferences, behaviour, and past interactions make promotions more relevant and impactful, boosting engagement and brand loyalty.

6. Social media and digital platforms amplify festive campaigns by enhancing reach and engagement. Influencer collaborations, festive-themed content, reels, live shopping events, and AR try-ons capture attention, drive interaction, and make the campaign shareable and memorable.

7. Multi-platform personalisation increases customer engagement. Customising offers and messages across email, SMS, WhatsApp, mobile apps, and websites ensures relevance at every touchpoint and enhances conversion rates.

8. Supply chain disruptions during peak shopping periods can delay deliveries and reduce customer satisfaction. Brands must use AI-driven demand forecasting, maintain buffer inventory, use real-time tracking, and collaborate with last-mile delivery partners to ensure smooth operations.

9. High marketing spend during festivals must be justified with measurable returns. With rising CPMs, brands need clear attribution models, retargeting strategies, and A/B testing to optimise campaigns and ensure high ROI without overspending.

10. Standing out in an oversaturated festive market requires creativity and relevance Instead of only discounts, brands must leverage data to personalise offerings, use niche influencers, tell compelling stories, and offer limited-edition products or packaging to attract attention.

About IAMAI

The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) is a not-for-profit industry body with over 650 members, including Indian and multinational corporations, as well as start-ups. IAMAI has been instrumental in shaping India's digital economy. The IAMAI advocates free and fair competition, and progressive and enabling laws for businesses as well as for consumers. The overarching objective of the IAMAI is to ensure the progress of the internet and the digital economy. Its major areas of activities are public policy and advocacy, business to business conferences, research, promotion of start-ups and promotion of consumer trust and safety.

About CLICK

Over the past decade, the India Affiliate Summit (IAS) has been at the forefront, shaping India's affiliate marketing landscape by setting new standards in innovation, thought leadership, and industry collaboration. In its new avatar as CLICK 2025, the event has broadened its horizons, bringing in a more expansive vision that encompasses the full spectrum of digital performance marketing.

CLICK 2025 has embraced diverse domains, including programmatic advertising, influencer marketing, content commerce and data-driven strategies. Designed to power the next decade of digital marketing excellence, CLICK 2025 is where performance meets purpose and ambition translates into action.

Whether you are a brand, agency, publisher or technology enabler, CLICK 2025 is the destination where the future of marketing takes shape. Look forward to immersive content, cutting-edge discussions, and high-impact networking opportunities, all geared towards delivering meaningful business outcomes in an ever-changing digital landscape.

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