



Happy shopping?

As The Festival Of Lights Approaches, Does Light Still Exist Under The Shutters?

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Diwali is a festival that is celebrated like a season. People rush to markets and malls to buy every possible product they waited for the whole year. As the weight of shopping bags was ignored, the heaviness of retailers' pockets was overjoyed. But such days can only be reminisced about as the 'Big billion' and 'Diwali special' offers have directed the customers away from the local shopping experience. With empty pockets, the shopkeepers struggle to truly believe that it is indeed a 'happy' Diwali.



GT reporters in conversation with shop owner in Sarojini Nagar market



Local vendor waiting for 'Lakshmi'



Stores light up with variety for Diwali

Let this ship(ment) sink
 With ecommerce shipments hitting 3 million- daily during festive season, local shopkeepers struggle to keep the shutter up. "Our business has gone down by 30-40% in the last 5 years, this season is no better," says Manoj Taneja, owner of a menswear store in Sarojini Nagar. Matching online discounts is not the only hurdle. With ecommerce sites offering EMIs and cashback on the sale of even a pencil, the offline shopkeepers struggle to

record a profit in their books.

Every day is Diwali

The online sale that goes on year long has not only affected how the country shopped, but also the income of those who desperately waited for the festive season. Ajay Khanna, a shop owner selling sarees in Karol Bagh says, "Earlier, Diwali meant full prices. There was no need to offer discounts because the customers would shop anyway. With such heavy online discounts, we

are forced to offer Diwali sales, cutting on our profits."

"People still shop during Diwali, but the sale during festive season has only been dipping for the past few years, going as low as 40% this year," says KL Nanda, owner of serving ware store in the busy Sadar Bazar. A survey by Criteo says the average online sale has gone up by 140%.

The continuous chain of one discount on another has forced retailers to burn a hole in their own pocket to attract customers.

"Earlier, sales were held only twice a year, which were usually stock clearance sales before the onset of the next seasons. Now with online sales offering discounts through the year, we are offering sales as many as five times a year," says Mr Gupta, a store owner in South Extension.

Try it then buy it

The ultimate motto of 'Pehle is-temaal kare, phir vishwaas kare' is thrown out the window when it comes to online shopping. Re-

tailers believe that these websites provide such colossal discounts because of their tie ups with big brands or the upcoming market of fake products. Mohan Lal, a salesman in an electronics store lamented, "Companies like Amazon are offering a 1.5 tonne split AC for less than Rs 30,000." He also elucidated that these brands buy their products in bulk off season, enabling them to later sell at nominal rates. Another salesperson Deepa at cosmetic store at Lajpat Nagar Main Market, per-

ceives that sales online have grown because of availability of fake products, making it easier to manipulate prices.

Regardless, they still believe in the theory of 'touch and feel' to convince a customer of a product.

In between the struggle of matching up to online discounts and keeping their doors open, these businessmen remain hopeful, awarding sweat and blood to their work, hoping for their Diwali to be golden again. 🇮🇳

Pics: Dakshesh Bharal, AIS PV, X E



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