



The Fake Discount Epidemic In E-Commerce Platform: An Examination Of Tactics, Tools, And Consumer Awareness

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the issue of **fake discounts** in e-commerce and explores how consumers recognize and respond to deceptive pricing practices. As online retailers increasingly inflate original prices or overstate discounts, the research investigates how shoppers use available tools to verify the authenticity of discounts. An online survey with 102 participants was conducted to assess their online shopping habits, trust in e-commerce platforms, and actions taken after encountering fake discounts. The study also examines the influence of social media on consumer perceptions and the use of price comparison tools.

The research highlights the need for greater consumer education and accessible resources, as many shoppers are unaware of how to address deceptive pricing tactics. Categories such as fashion and electronics are particularly vulnerable to these practices, necessitating stricter regulation. The study advocates for transparent pricing, clearer guidelines, and collaboration between e-commerce platforms, regulators, and consumers to foster a safer and more trustworthy online shopping environment.

Keywords: Deceptive pricing, E-commerce platform, Fake discount, online shopping

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 outbreak has led to an increase in online shopping as a safer alternative for many people. With the expanding internet retail business, more people are shopping online. However, some online retailers are resorting to unethical or illegal marketing practices to attract customers, such as using pricing methods like 'yo-yo pricing' and 'predatory pricing.' This introduction sets the stage for further research into the prevalence and impact of fake discounts in online retail. Examples of pricing strategies include 'yo-yo pricing' (raising prices when supply is low and dropping prices when supply increases) and 'predatory pricing.' Predatory pricing refers to Internet businesses lowering their product prices below production costs to drive competitors out of business. The e-commerce industry in India has experienced unprecedented growth in recent years, with more consumers turning to online shopping due to its convenience, flexibility, and attractive discounts. However, this rapid growth has also led to the emergence of a significant concern that demands immediate attention: fake discounts. This fraudulent practice, which involves misleading consumers with inflated original prices, has become a widespread issue in the Indian e-commerce industry, with severe consequences for consumers, businesses, and the economy. The urgency of addressing this issue is paramount, and immediate action is necessary to protect the integrity of the e-commerce industry. This research is a crucial step toward this goal, and we must act swiftly to combat this growing threat.

Unscrupulous sellers often trick customers with fake discounts, especially during significant sales events. It's hard for shoppers to tell if they're saving money among all the promotions. Retailers sometimes raise prices before offering discounts, damaging trust and distorting online shopping competition. Unscrupulous sellers often trick customers with fake discounts, especially during significant sales events. It's hard for shoppers to tell if they're saving money among all the promotions. Retailers sometimes raise prices before offering discounts, damaging trust and distorting online shopping competition.

According to a recent survey, over 50% of Indians have fallen prey to discount scams (Economic Times, 2020). The victims of fake discounts often suffer financial losses, erosion of trust in online shopping, and psychological distress. The impact of these scams on consumers is profound, with many experiencing a sense of betrayal and disillusionment. Moreover, counterfeit discounts perpetuate a culture of dishonesty in the e-



commerce industry, undermining the integrity of online marketplaces and damaging the reputation of genuine businesses. It is crucial to address this issue to prevent further harm and restore consumer confidence.

The problem of fake discounts is complex and involves many people and factors. Customers, businesses, and online shopping sites all have important roles in either encouraging or stopping these fake discounts. It's essential for everyone involved to know their responsibilities to protect customers and keep online shopping honest. Solving this problem requires everyone to work together, emphasizing the importance of unity in this effort. By coming together, we can create a safer online shopping environment for everyone involved.

The convenience of online shopping comes with hidden danger-fake discounts. Some businesses trick consumers with false price cuts, leading to financial losses and erosion of trust. This cybercrime can have serious consequences, including identity theft and financial fraud.

The Legal Implications of Retailer Price Violations and Fake Discounts

The landscape of promotional pricing has become complex, with retailers employing various techniques to create the illusion of savings. However, some retailers engage in deceptive practices, such as retailer price violations and fake discounts, which mislead consumers and have profound legal implications. These unethical tactics have drawn the attention of regulatory bodies like the Federal Trade Commission and sparked a surge in class action lawsuits, highlighting the need for stricter enforcement of consumer protection laws.

Types of Retailer Price Violations

Retailers sometimes engage in deceptive pricing tactics to attract customers and boost sales, misleading consumers and potentially breaking laws. Here are three common violations:

False Reference Pricing

This tactic involves manipulating original prices to create a false impression of savings. Retailers might display an inflated original price, making the discount appear more significant. This includes fictitious markdowns, false "original" prices, and frequent price changes.

A notable case involved JC Penney, which faced a lawsuit in Southern California for allegedly using false reference pricing. Maria Carranza accused the company of inventing 'original' prices, then offering fake discounts, claiming items were never sold at those high prices.

Perpetual Sale Pricing

This occurs when stores keep products on sale continuously, prompting customers to think they must buy quickly. This practice can violate rules limiting the duration of sales.

For example, in California, a store can advertise a 'sale' from an original price for just three months. After this period, the store must either return to the original price or continue at the sale price while stating when it was last sold at the original price.

Bait-and-switch Advertising

Bait-and-switch advertising is when a store promotes a product at an attractive price but doesn't intend to sell it at that price. This practice is unethical and often illegal. The appealing offer is "the bait," while directing customers to a pricier product is "the switch". This violates the Federal Trade Commission Act, which prohibits "unfair or deceptive acts or practices." Bait-and-switch practices can lead to legal problems like fraud, unjust enrichment, or breach of contract. This study explores the prevalence and impact of fake discounts in India, their effects on society and e-commerce platforms, the background and nature of this phenomenon, and the consequences for consumers and businesses. By examining the current scenario and available tools and apps, this study seeks to provide insights into promoting a fair and transparent online marketplace where consumers can trust the discounts they receive.

Even though there are several ways for customers to safeguard their interests when faced with totally fake or deceptive discounts, customers should exercise caution and proper checks when making purchases online and do their own on product prices because disreputable companies with business practices have become more prevalent in recent years. Platforms for online shopping should Consider revising rules for businesses setting prices. Platforms should better monitor companies to promptly resolve issues like fraudulent discounts for affected customers.

LITERATURE OF REVIEW

A research paper by Johannes Johnen 2019, "**Deceptive Products on Platforms**" paper examines the incentives of online platforms to disclose additional fees and features of products sold by third-party sellers. The study finds that platforms have more substantial incentives to hide extra fees than sellers, mainly when platforms aim to increase buyer surplus per interaction. Regulation can increase transparency, and transparency-inducing policies are discussed. Cases where platforms limit cross-group externalities, which are



the unintended side effects of a transaction that affect a third party, such as increased competition or reduced consumer trust, to soften competition and benefit buyers, are also explored. The studies find platforms hide fees more than sellers, and they regulate fees to reduce competition. Consumers may not learn from their mistakes even if they experience them, as infrequent users have little chance to learn, and consumers might forget.

Another study by Faryabi.M.Sadeghzadeh,K & Saed.M ,2012, "**The effect of price discount and store image on consumer's purchase intention in online shopping context; Case study Nokia and HTC**" This study examines the impact of price discounts and store image on consumers' purchase intentions in online shopping contexts, using Nokia and HTC as case studies. The researchers employed an online survey of 384 respondents and used structural equation modelling to analyze the data. Findings indicate that price discounts significantly positively affect purchase intention, while store image moderates the relationship between price discounts and purchase intention. Specifically, a strong store image can enhance the positive impact of price discounts on purchase intention. The study's results suggest that online retailers should offer competitive discounts and maintain a positive store image to increase consumers' purchase intentions. The study contributes to understanding the complex relationship between price discounts, store image, and consumer behavior in online shopping contexts.

As per the studied by Prashant Sanap, Swati Shinde, Anjali Mahajan, Rahul Vishe, Anuprita Gawande 2022, This study introduces a price comparison website that uses object recognition to help users find the best prices across different e-commerce sites. Users can upload product images, and the system, which uses Python and object recognition, identifies products and retrieves price information from websites. The goal is to provide accurate and up-to-date price information, benefiting consumers and e-commerce sites. The methodology employs object recognition technology, Python programming, and web scraping to retrieve price information. The findings indicate that the system effectively identifies products and provides accurate price comparisons, enabling consumers to make informed purchasing decisions. The study contributes to developing efficient price comparison tools, enhancing online shopping experiences, and promoting competition among e-commerce sites. By streamlining price comparisons, the system saves time and effort for consumers, making it a valuable resource in the e-commerce landscape.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Aim of the Study

: This research investigates **public experiences with fake discounts in e-commerce** and **assesses consumer awareness** of tools for verifying original prices. By examining how consumers navigate misleading pricing practices and use price comparison tools, the study aims to identify gaps in consumer knowledge and confidence. Ultimately, it seeks to provide a **roadmap for implementing effective strategies**, fostering a more secure and transparent online shopping environment.

Objectives of the study

- : 1. To analyse the **frequency of online shopping** to understand consumer engagement and discount exposure.
2. To **identify key factors** influencing consumer perceptions of discounted prices.
3. To know **consumer reactions to fake discounts** on e-commerce platforms.
4. To examine the **price verification habits** of e-shopping customers.
5. To analyse fraudulent discount mechanisms and consumer **confidence in spotting them**.
6. To examine the influence of **social media** on consumer perceptions of discounts.

Research Design

: Current study adopted **Descriptive** method which will help to under stand the prevalence and characteristics of experiences with fake discounts among consumers even helps to identify the responcess, patterns, trends and common themes.

Sample Type

: **Non-Probability Convenience Sampling Method** included in study, To achive sample size. This method was chosen because it gives respondents easy



Sample Size	:	access via Google Forms. It allows data to be collected from readily available participants willing to share their experiences.
	:	102 Sample Achived , considered sufficient for preliminary analysis and balances feasibility and statistical significance for this type of survey-based research
Data Collection Method	:	Online Survey via Google Forms , Data has been collected using questionnaires (both closed-ended and open-ended) through Google Forms to ensure a comprehensive and accurate data collection process. The questions were prepared using the primary method to gather relevant information.
Statistical Analysis	:	The research will include suitable graphs, tabulations, pie charts and percentages.
Limitations	:	The sample may not represent the general population , as it relies on respondents who are accessible and willing to participate, which is known as Convenience Sampling Bias

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table No- 1 Online shopping habits

Sl. No	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	Weekly	53	51.96
2	Monthly	39	38.23
3	Rarely	09	8.823
4	Never	01	0.98

From the above data, It is found that **53 respondents (51.96%) shop weekly, indicating a strong preference for the convenience and variety of e-commerce offers**. This segment may benefit from loyalty programs and exclusive deals. Meanwhile, **39 respondents (38.23%) shop monthly**, reflecting a planned approach, possibly for specific needs or budget reasons. Monthly shoppers could be motivated by seasonal promotions or bundled deals. Rarely, **at 9 respondents (8.8%), of people prefer in-store experiences or have concerns about product quality and online reliability**; targeted reassurance, like customer testimonials or flexible return policies, may appeal to this group. Finally, **1 respondents (0.98%) report never shopping online**, likely due to a preference for traditional shopping or digital access issues. Overall, the high percentage of weekly and monthly shoppers underscores the importance of a seamless e-commerce experience, suggesting opportunities to increase engagement by catering to each group's unique habits and preferences.

Table No -2 The habit of checking the original price of a product before purchasing it at a discount online.

Sl. No	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	Always	51	50
2	Often	25	24.5
3	Rarely	21	20.6
4	Never	05	4.9

The data indicates respondents' habits in checking the original price before purchasing discounted product online. **Half of the respondents (50%) "always" check the original price**, suggesting a high level of price-consciousness, likely aimed at validating the discount's authenticity. **About 25 respondents (24.5%) report "often" checking, indicating a frequent but less consistent price-verification habit**. Meanwhile, **21 respondents (20.6%) "rarely" check**, suggesting some reliance on trust or a lesser concern for price authenticity. **Only (4.9%) "never" verify original prices**, likely indicating confidence in the discounts presented or a low priority placed on validation.

Table No – 3 Misleading Discounted Prices on E-Commerce Platforms

Sl.No	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	YES	62	60.78



2	NO	40	39.22
	Total	102	100

The findings examine experiences of deceptive discounted prices on e-commerce websites. Of the 102 participants, **60.78% (n=62) indicated that they had experienced deceptive discounts**, whereas **39.22% (n=40) did not**. The prevalence of positive response from the majority indicates a high degree of consumer sensitivity and mistrust towards online discount schemes, which might be due to prior experiences of irregular or deceptive pricing. The 39.22% answering "No" suggests a large percentage who might have faith in e-commerce websites or do not check original prices actively. This breakdown indicates an overall trend of distrust among internet consumers with respect to price transparency, reflecting the possibility of regulatory measures or clearer price presentation to in still confidence in online transactions.

Table No – 4 Confidence in Understanding the Accurate Price of Discounted Products

SI. No	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very confident	54	52.94
2	Somewhat confident	27	26.47
3	Not at all Confident	21	20.59

This data evaluates respondents' confidence in knowing the correct price of discounted items. **Most, 52.94% (n=54), reported being "Very confident,"** showing a high self-assurance in identifying genuine discounts. This could suggest frequent online shopping or a practice of cross-checking prices. In contrast, **26.47% (n=27) are "Somewhat confident,"** reflecting some dependence on the discount information offered but with some reservations. Finally, **20.59% (n=21) reported being "Not at all confident,"** showing a lack of faith in discounted price accuracy, perhaps due to fear of deceptive pricing. The information indicates a necessity for e-commerce sites to provide clear pricing information to increase consumer trust, especially among the less confident respondents.

Table No -5 Factors Influencing Perception of Discounted Prices.

SI.NO	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Percentage discount	25	24.5
2	Original price	22	21.56
3	Comparative prices from other websites	21	20.58
4	Product review	11	10.78
5	Brand name	11	10.78
6	Product Features	10	9.80
7	Other:	1	0.98

The data reveals critical factors that shape respondents' perceptions of discounted prices on e-commerce platforms. The most influential factor is the **percentage discount** itself, noted by **25 respondents (24.5%)**, indicating that the discount's size significantly attracts consumer attention and drives perceived value. The **original price** is also a critical factor for 22 respondents, suggesting that consumers often rely on comparisons between the original and discounted prices to assess deal authenticity. Additionally, **comparative prices from other websites** influence 21 respondents, highlighting the importance of cross-platform comparisons in validating perceived savings. Factors such as **product reviews** and **brand names** (each cited by 11 respondents) suggest that perceptions of quality and brand trustworthiness play substantial roles in discount perception. **Product features** were less influential (10 respondents), indicating that specific product attributes may be secondary considerations when discounts are involved. Only one respondent selected "Other," suggesting that the listed factors sufficiently represent the primary influences on consumer discount perception.

Table No – 6 Importance of Knowing the Original Price on Discounted Products.

SI.NO	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very important	71	69.61
2	Somewhat important	26	25.49
3	Not at all important	05	4.90



The data collected assesses respondents' perceived importance of knowing the original price of discounted products. **A significant majority, 71 respondents (approximately 69.61%), indicated that knowing the original price is "Significant."** This strong preference suggests that consumers prioritize price transparency, likely to validate discounts' legitimacy and make informed purchasing decisions. Furthermore, **26 respondents (25.49%) found it "Somewhat important," reflecting a general awareness of pricing integrity**, albeit with less intensity. Only **five respondents (4.90%) deemed it "Not at all important," indicating a minority who may not feel the need for such information.** The findings underscore a critical consumer expectation for transparency in pricing, indicating that e-commerce platforms should emphasize original price visibility to enhance consumer trust and satisfaction in their discount offerings.

Table No – 7 Noticing Common Practices in Online Shopping

SI.NO.	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Price being inflated before a discount.	30	29.4
2	Discounts are being applied to the already reduced price	28	27.45
3	Unrealistic discount (e.g. 90% offer)	27	26.47
4	Misleading discount comparison	07	6.8
5	Poor website quality	07	6.8
6	Nothing, I haven't noticed anything.	02	1.9
7	Other	01	0.98

This data reveals key practices consumers observe in online shopping, highlighting their scepticism about pricing strategies. The most cited issue, reported by 30 respondents, is **price inflation before discounts**, raising concerns about authenticity. Additionally, **28 respondents (27.45%)** noted that **discounts are often applied to already reduced prices**, misleading shoppers about actual savings. Awareness of **unrealistic discounts**, like claims of 90% off, was mentioned by 27 participants. Issues such as **misleading comparisons** and **poor website quality** were each noted by **7 respondents (6.8%)**, indicating transparency concerns. Overall, most consumers are critical of online shopping practices, underscoring the need for clearer pricing strategies. Consumers are increasingly aware of and sceptical toward various pricing strategies, such as price inflation before discounts and misleading promotional claims. The significant awareness of practices like applying discounts to already reduced prices highlights the need for e-commerce platforms to adopt clearer and more honest pricing policies. To enhance consumer trust and satisfaction, online retailers need to prioritize transparency and integrity in their pricing strategies. Addressing these concerns will not only improve the shopping experience but also foster long-term loyalty among consumers in a competitive digital marketplace.

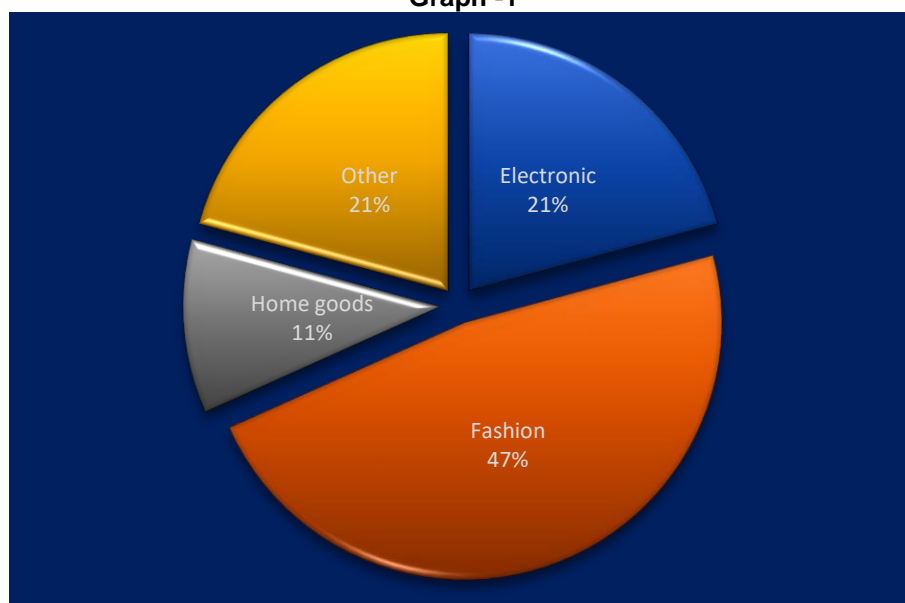
Table No – 8 Determining if a Discounted Price is a Good Deal When Shopping

SI.NO	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Check the original price history	30	29.41
2	Compare prices across different websites.	28	27.45
3	Trust the E-Commerce platform pricing.	07	6.8
4	Use a comparison app to find the best deal	07	6.8
5	Read product reviews	27	26.47
6	I don't usually check; I just buy	02	1.9
7	Other	01	0.9

This data explores consumer methods for determining if a discounted price is truly a good deal, revealing varied strategies that reflect different levels of engagement and trust in online shopping. A large portion of respondents (29.41 % and 27.45%) reported **checking the original price history** and **comparing prices across websites** as primary methods, indicating a proactive approach to verifying the discount's authenticity. Others showed reliance on **trust in the e-commerce platform's pricing** or **comparison apps**, suggesting that a significant group prefers simpler, tech-enabled ways to confirm a good deal. Meanwhile, some respondents cited **product reviews** as influential, valuing feedback from other buyers to gauge both quality and value. Notably, a minority indicated they "just buy" without checking, suggesting a lack of concern for detailed verification. These findings suggest that while many consumers actively verify prices, a subset relies on the platform's perceived trustworthiness. E-commerce sites could benefit from emphasizing price transparency and comparison tools directly on their platforms to increase consumer trust and support informed purchasing.

**Table No: 9 Product Types Associated with Fake Discount Encounters.**

SI.NO	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Electronic	21	20.58
2	Fashion	48	47.05
3	Home goods	11	10.78
4	Other	21	20.58

Graph -1

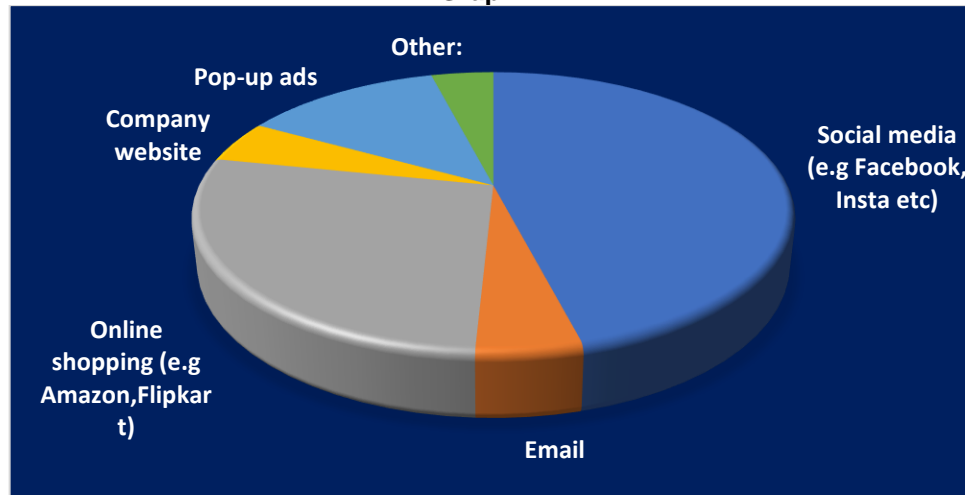
Data examines the types of products most associated with fake discount encounters in online shopping. **Fashion items** lead significantly, with **48 respondents** indicating they had experienced misleading discounts in this category. This high frequency may suggest that fashion products, given their seasonal demand and wide price variability, are particularly prone to inflated discount claims. **Electronics** were also notable, with **21 respondents** reporting encounters with fake discounts in this category. **Electronics often carry higher price tags, which may make exaggerated discounts appear more appealing and thus more frequent.** **Home goods** were reported by **11 respondents**, suggesting that while less prevalent, this category is not immune to pricing manipulation. 21 respondents indicated encountering fake discounts in an unspecified "Other" category. **Categories like fashion and electronics are particularly associated with fake discounts, likely due to their high demand and price flexibility.** To address these concerns, e-commerce platforms should increase transparency, especially in these high-risk categories, to build consumer trust and encourage informed purchasing.

Table No – 10 Factors Leading Victimaization to Fake Discounts

SI.NO	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Social media (e.g Facebook, Insta etc)	47	46.07
2	Email	05	4.9
3	Online shopping (e.g Amazon ,Flipkart)	28	27.4
4	Company website	05	4.9
5	Pop-up ads	13	12.74
6	Other:	04	3.9



Graph -2



This data examines the primary sources through which consumers encounter fake discounts, highlighting the platforms that may influence purchasing decisions. **Social media**, with 47 respondents, emerges as the leading factor where consumers fall victim to misleading discounts. The high engagement rates and targeted ads on platforms like Facebook and Instagram likely increase consumer susceptibility to such promotions. **Online shopping platforms (e.g., Amazon, Flipkart)** were the second most frequently cited, with 28 respondents, suggesting that even established e-commerce sites are not immune to perceived discount manipulation. **Pop-up ads** were mentioned by **13 respondents**, indicating their persistent impact despite many consumers generally disregarding them. **Emails** and **company websites** were both noted by 5 respondents each, while **Other sources** had 4 respondents, showing that these channels have a lesser but still notable influence. These findings suggest that **social media and popular e-commerce platforms** are the primary avenues for fake discount encounters, likely due to the high volume of targeted marketing on these sites. To reduce consumer susceptibility, regulatory action and awareness initiatives focused on these platforms may prove effective in promoting more transparent online advertising and enhancing consumer protection.

Table No – 11 After falling victim to a fake discount offer, what type of product did you receive?

SI.NO	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Fake product	11	10.78
2	Low-quality product	48	47.06
3	Different products that I ordered	20	19.61
4	No product was received	14	13.73
5	Other	09	8.82

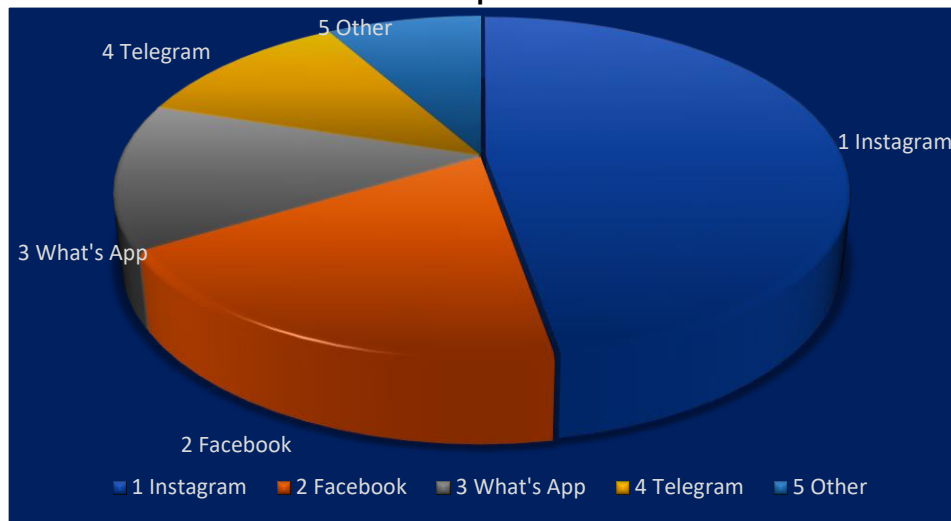
Table no 11, shows that most people who fell for fake discount offers ended up with **low-quality** products, making up 48 of the responses. This suggests scammers use big discounts to trick customers into buying cheap items. About **20 of people got a different product than what they ordered**, pointing to misleading advertising. Some, **14 respondents (13.73%), didn't receive any product at all**, meaning they were fully scammed. Only **11 respondents (10.78%) got a fake product**, while **9 had other bad experiences**, like receiving damaged goods. Overall, the data shows that many people were tricked into paying for items that weren't what they expected, **whether they were poor quality, different, or never arrived**. This highlights the importance of being careful when shopping online to avoid these types of scams.

Table No – 12 Social Media Platforms Commonly Linked to Fake Discount Offers



Sl.No	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Instagram	52	50.98
2	Facebook	21	20.59
3	What's App	15	14.71
4	Telegram	13	12.75
5	Other	09	8.82

Graph -3



The data reveals that **Instagram is the most frequently 52 responses (50.98%)**, a linked platform to fake discount offers, indicating a high level of scepticism among consumers regarding discounts encountered on this platform. **Facebook follows with 21 responses (20.59%)**, while **WhatsApp and Telegram are identified by 15 (14.71%) and 13 (12.75%)** respondents, respectively. The "Other" category, which includes **less commonly mentioned platforms, accounts for 9 responses (8.82%)**. This highlights the widespread concern about misleading offers on major social media platforms, particularly Instagram.

Table No – 13 Actions Taken After Experiencing a Fake Discount

Sl.NO	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Reported	23	22.54
2	Left a negative review	25	24.50
3	Shared experience on social media	14	13.72
4	Contacted customer service	12	11.76
5	Did nothing	22	21.56
6	Other	06	5.8

The data reveals the actions taken by individuals after falling victim to a fake discount offer. A significant number, **25 of respondents, left a negative review**, possibly to warn others about their experience or express dissatisfaction. Similarly, **23 (22.54%) reported the issue, indicating that many people attempted to take formal action**, likely through consumer protection channels or authorities. Around **14 (13.72 %) of individuals shared their experience on social media**, likely to raise awareness and help others avoid similar scams. Additionally, **12 (11.76%) contacted customer service**, possibly in an attempt to resolve the issue directly with the seller. However, **22(21.56%) of people did nothing**, suggesting a lack of awareness about how to handle such situations or a sense of powerlessness in the face of the scam. Lastly, **6 respondents (5.8%) took other actions**, which might include seeking legal advice or pursuing alternative solutions. Overall, the data highlights that many consumers took proactive steps, though a considerable portion choose not to act at all.

Table No – 14 Motivations to Check the Original Price of Discounted Items.

Sl.No	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Fear of being scammed	39	38.23
2	Desire to save money	30	29.41



3	Curiosity about discount	23	22.54
4	Habit	08	7.8
5	Other	02	1.9

According to table no 14, The data reveals diverse human motivations behind online discount engagement. A **significant 39 respondents (38.23%) of consumers express fear of being scammed**, reflecting a sense of vulnerability and distrust, highlighting the need for transparency and ethical practices in e-commerce. Meanwhile, **30 respondents (29.41%) are driven by a desire to save money**, showcasing practical decision-making and the importance of value-oriented offerings. Curiosity motivates **of 23 respondents, illustrating (22.54%) a natural human inclination** to explore and uncover potential opportunities, often for the excitement of discovery. **For 7.8%, engaging with discounts has become a habit**, shaped by repeated exposure and familiarity, emphasizing the influence of routine on consumer behaviour. The **remaining 02 respondents (1.9%) represents unique, individual motivations**, showcasing the varied and personal ways consumers interact with online platforms. Overall, these insights underscore the importance of understanding emotional drivers like fear, curiosity, and value-seeking to foster trust and create meaningful, consumer-friendly shopping experiences.

Confidence in Identifying Fake Discounts

The majority of respondents feel somewhat confident or very confident in identifying fake discounts. Specifically, **57 (55.88%) of individuals reported being "somewhat confident,"** suggesting that most people have a general awareness of how to spot misleading deals but may still have doubts in certain situations. Additionally, **35 (34.31%) of respondents expressed being "very confident,"** indicating a solid understanding of how to distinguish between legitimate and fake discounts. However, **10 (9.8%) respondents of individuals stated that they are "not at all confident,"** highlighting a small but significant portion of consumers who may be more vulnerable to scams. This suggests that while many people are aware of the risks associated with fake discounts, there remains a group that lacks the knowledge or experience to recognize fraudulent offers. The data underscores the importance of consumer education to help individuals develop the skills to identify and avoid scams in an increasingly complex online shopping environment.

Table No – 15 Using Tools to Compare Prices Across E-Commerce Platforms.

SI No	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	37	36.27
2	Sometime	43	42.156
3	No	22	21.56

The data reveals the way users behave along with which they prefer when using tools to compare costs across e-commerce platforms. **43 respondents (42.15%) said they "Sometimes" use these tools**, indicating that although they acknowledge their importance, their use may vary depending on certain situations, such as expensive purchases or special offers. In the mean while, of **37 respondents (36.27%) regularly utilize these tools**, which suggests a proactive approach to finding the best offers and may indicate a customer base that is cost-conscious. On the other hand, **22 (21.56%) say they never use these tools**, which may be due to a lack of knowledge, mistrust, or a preference for ease over cost-cutting. The **majority 80 (76.8%) respondents acknowledge the usefulness of price comparison tools to some extent**, which highlights the disparities in their dependence. To promote broader customer acceptance, businesses should take advantage of this knowledge by raising awareness, making comparison tools easier to use, and fostering trust.

Table No – 16 Usage of Price Comparison Websites Like PriceGrabber or Nex Tag.

SI.No	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	27	26.47
2	No	60	58.82
3	Heard of them but never used	15	14.70

The data highlights user familiarity and engagement with price comparison websites like PriceGrabber or NexTag. **A majority, 60 (58.8%), report not using these platforms**, suggesting either a lack of awareness of their benefits or a preference for other shopping methods. **15 respondents (14.70%) have heard of these tools** but never used them, indicating untapped potential for adoption if users are educated about the value these sites offer, such as saving time and money. **Only 27(26.47%) actively use price comparison websites**,



demonstrating a smaller but informed group that likely prioritizes cost efficiency and thorough research when shopping online. This trend may reflect a gap in marketing or a shift toward integrated price comparison features offered by popular e-commerce platforms. For wider adoption, these websites must focus on user-friendly interfaces, robust marketing campaigns, and partnerships with major retailers to position themselves as indispensable tools in the online shopping experience.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. A significant portion of **53 respondents (51.96%) shop online weekly**, with **39 respondents (38.23%) shopping monthly**, reflecting a preference for convenience and planned purchases. A smaller group of 9, shop rarely (8.8%) or never (0.9%), which presents an opportunity for platforms to engage them with targeted loyalty programs and promotions.
2. **(50%) of the respondents always verify prices** before purchasing discounted products, highlighting high price awareness. This indicates that e-commerce platforms should focus on transparent pricing to build trust, especially since a smaller portion of **5 (4.9%) never checks prices**.
3. **Over 62 respondents (60.78%) have encountered misleading discounts**, fuelling scepticism toward e-commerce pricing. These findings emphasize the need for clearer pricing strategies and adherence to regulatory standards to enhance consumer confidence and prevent deceptive practices.
4. Confidence in understanding discounted prices varies, with **54 respondents (52.94%) feeling very confident** and **21 (20.59%) lacking confidence**. E-commerce platforms should improve transparency and provide tools to assist less confident consumers in verifying prices.
5. Price perception is largely influenced by **percentage discounts, original prices, and comparative prices**. Secondary factors like **product reviews and brand names suggest that platforms** should offer clear discount structures and reliable price comparisons to aid consumer decision-making.
6. **The majority of 71 respondents (69.61%)** consider it very important to know the original price of discounted products. This highlights the strong demand for transparency, suggesting that platforms should prioritize clear and accessible pricing information.
7. A significant portion **30 respondents (29.4%) report encountering price inflation before discounts** and discounts applied to **already reduced prices 28 respondents (27.45%)**. These findings point to the need for ethical pricing practices and **27% respondents rely on review** strategies to avoid consumer scepticism and build trust.
8. **Reasons for Price Checking: 38.23%** check prices because they have the **fear of scams**, **29.41% in order to save money**, and **22.54% out of curiosity**. This reflects that people's behavior is based on trust and financial issues.
9. **The most affected category is fashion (47.05%)**, followed by **electronics (20.58%) and home goods (10.78%)**. This shows that certain industries are more prone to deceptive pricing.
10. **47 respondents (46.07%)** of those polled had come across misleading discounts on social media, with **Instagram being the most frequently 52 respondents (50.98%) reported** followed by **27.4% on shopping websites** and **12.74% by pop-up ads**. This indicates that social media plays a big part in advertising misleading offers.

SUGGESTION

Shoppers can contribute to the battle against bogus discounts by price-comparison tools and reporting such malpractices when they come across them. Institutions such as the **National Consumer Complaints Centre (NCCC)** and the **Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (MDTCA)** provide avenues through which individuals can report and settle such problems. By making their voices heard, consumers can assist in ensuring that companies remain accountable and internet shopping is fair for all. The prevalence of fake discounts indicates why stricter regulations are needed. Regular monitoring and proper guidelines for discount advertisements can prevent unethical activities. **Online portals and regulators need to join hands for safeguarding consumers and maintaining fair prices. Transparency of pricing**, in the form of access to past and original prices, is instrumental in building confidence. Verifiable claims of discounts can assist in helping consumers to identify real deals and steer clear of scams.

CONCLUSION

The research highlights that, while online shopping remains highly popular, with many **consumers shopping regularly**, there is a notable **need for transparency and trust in pricing practices**. Most shoppers check prices before buying, and many have been victims of deceptive discounts, leading to scepticism towards online prices. To curb this, e-commerce websites can be very clear on their pricing, transparent on their discount practices, and have **sound price verification SSstools**. **Fashion and electronics**, the sectors most



vulnerable to deceptive discounts, need greater surveillance. **Social media are a key source of fictitious discount scams**, thus the call for enhanced consumer education and regulation of online ads.

The fake discounts and their economic and psychological effects on consumers call for immediate action from regulators, platforms, and consumer advocacy organizations to work together. Standardization of discount disclosure, auditing, and redress mechanisms should be able to prevent unethical behaviour. **Transparency, ethical pricing, and consumer empowerment should be prioritized to build trust and support the integrity of e-commerce ecosystems.**

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