

## GIFT CARD BUSINESS–A GIFTED OPPORTUNITY

*Understanding the corporate retailer's Gift Card business facets and future with special reference to corporate companies and firms in IT & ITES sector in India*

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*Abstract-*

*Corporate gift giving is becoming serious business, Gift card industry is rapidly growing day by day. The concept of presenting gift cards is being practiced for the developing sustainable business relationship bonds. We can see across all the categories of organized retail chains, shopping mall, food chains, restaurants, hotels, entertainment, spas and salons etc are having some sort of cards made available for the customers. Gone are the days and times when brand names, logos, or labels could solely woo the customers. The industry has changed drastically and emerged as the experiential economy. Retailers, today constantly require engaging in loyalty management initiatives and offer higher intangible value to the customers, and ultimately ensure long-lasting relations. As gift card help to acquire new customers, loyalty programmes play a crucial role in retaining them and increasing lifetime association and value.*

*Similarly through one business to other; the gift card industry is in the growing mode. The industry is set for a drastic growth in view of the additional value and personalized experience presented to the customer by utilizing different customer engagement tactics.*

*Keywords- Gift Card, CRM-Customer Relationship Management, IT & ITES, Customer lifetime value (CLV, corporate gifting.*

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## Introduction-

*Corporate retailers are now effectively utilizing; different customer acquisition and intimacy initiatives including gift cards, loyalty programmes, e-coupons, bonus promotion, marketing campaigns etc -to increase customer engagement and lifetime value. This opportunity of revenue generation could be the boon that retailers have been waiting for, or it could turn into a missed opportunity. Consumers continue to change their shopping habits as well as their expectations. Shifting spending plans, shopping processes, and expectations are largely the result of improving perceptions of the economy, an onslaught of digital technology influencing consumers, more choices from a growing pool of online competitors, and fears of security breaches.*

*Retailers are well aware that their traditional selling techniques won't necessarily work, given these changes in consumer behavior. To help savvy retailers capitalize on this possible sales uptick, this article throws light on key factors; that influences the purchase decision process towards corporate retailer's Gift cards with special reference to IT & ITES industry.*

*There are mainly three levers for the gift card programmes-*

- a) The retailer get more customers*
- b) Or the retailer gets its customers to come more often*
- c) Or it get existing customers to buy more*

Gift cards are helping retailer's business to grow through other business ecosystems such as IT & ITES industry; which is fond of gifting to employees. Any sort of gifting is, can be done through gift card now. The occasion such as, timely completion of assignments/reports/projects or any achieving targets/deadlines; previously cash was the one thing given to employees but now the trend is actually changed and appreciation is expressed in the form of gifting a gift card. These gift cards can be used like, how we use credit/debit cards. These cards are easy to use/redeem, very handy and are easy and safer to carry.

In IT & ITES industry gifting is done to employees on the occasions of festivals, anniversaries, birthdays, appraisals, etc which is an excellent opportunity for retailers for their gift card business.

In addition to their traditional use around holiday seasons, gifts have many other applications in business: Typically, there are two kinds of gift cards in the market. A closed-loop card is merchant-branded one and can only be used at a single retail store or chain, such as the ones issued by Cafe Coffee Day or Fastrack. Then there is the open-loop card, which can only be issued by a bank along with a credit card company like Visa or MasterCard. These can be used across all stores.

## **Corporate Gift Applications for corporate companies-**

### **Employee recognition**

Many companies try to avoid incentives with certain categories of employees for fear of igniting harmful competition within their ranks or because they're unable to single out an individual's

incremental performance in a clearly measurable way. Instead, companies often give managers a discretionary budget that may be spent on gifts to recognize and appreciate the performing employees for their contributions and achievements. Actions worthy of special recognition/appreciation include going “above and beyond” to please a customer, putting in long hours to complete a project within the given deadline, making a cost-saving or productivity and or process-enhancing suggestion, or completing for achieving targeted sales figures etc. Some executives would argue that such actions are expected as part of an employee’s job deliverables and should be rewarded at performance-review time. However, the research suggests that carefully timed and appropriate gifts not only make people feel appreciated for their performance, they also increase the chances people will feel motivated for going the extra mile in the future. While giving gifts for special performance, companies should make sure that, the gift is appropriate to the employee receiving it and the presentation is made in a personal and preferably on public forum. The recipient and his or her colleagues must know why the gift is being presented. Publicity in the company newsletter, or even an announcement in the lunchroom, ensures that people know the types of behaviors/performances the organization wants to promote. Gifts are also typically awarded to employees for longer years of service.

*Retailers today are competing for grabbing higher chunk of corporate gifting market and to build a strong corporate customer base they are offering customized card programs, employee incentives and benefit card programs.*

### **Customers/clients**

With today’s increased emphasis on corporate ethics, they need to scrutinize not only the gift and the recipients, but the nature of the presentation. After determining which clients can accept gifts, think carefully about the gift and how it’s going to be presented. If you ship gifts to recipients, you miss an invaluable opportunity to reinforce the cordial relationship between your employees and your customers. Gifts have the desired impact when presented personally by the people who have direct contact with buyers. Imagine the surprise and delight when your customer gets a gift from their customer service representative!

### **Vendors**

With the increased quality consciousness of customers and consumers companies recognized the importance of building close relationships with suppliers. The trend continues; as manufacturers and retailers alike depend upon just-in-time deliveries and companies of all types demand the best quality products and services at the lowest prices. If a company depends on excellent service from its vendors for serving its own customers, it can bank on the long-term impact of gifting a few gift cards to them.

### **The media**

Most daily newspapers and many consumer magazines have strict policies about giving gifts to editors and reporters, but they’re often overlooked if the gift is simple, subtle and appropriately

timed so it doesn't look like a bribe. A very small, imaginative gift sent with a press release will increase the chances of your message being read, and that could translate into wider coverage. Corporate companies act very carefully while presenting gifts to consumer journalists whom you or your public relations people do not know personally. The gift could backfire by creating the wrong impression. Here gift cards come for rescue by virtue of its subtle nature.

### **Government officials**

Many businesses depend upon good working relations with government regulatory bodies or town officials. When regulatory officials or politicians are involved, corporate companies proceed with caution! Here also gift card becomes a safe haven for both; the corporate company and the recipient officials.

### ***Business Development***

It is very easy to issue and use the gift card and hence it presents a huge market potential with a handsome prospective customer base. It is an invaluable sales and marketing tool designed specifically to assist companies expedite the business development process, by providing your business with access to the decision makers within the industry.

But in these tough economic times the age old mantra of 'working smarter, not harder' definitely rings true and that's where Business Development can help your business succeed.

By utilizing Business Development for your sales, marketing and business development campaigns, you can be confident that your message is reaching the right people – every time.

Hence business development initiatives and activities done by retailers for gift cards in corporate companies in the growing sectors like IT & ITES provide best practice guides, advice and input for programme marketing and merchandising, which includes developing communication strategies as well as detailed marketing collaterals to increase visibility, multi-location display of gift cards for more impact, different key messages and themes for different category.

This also provides retailers with valuable inputs regarding-identifying the new revenue opportunities, marketing intelligence, creating the campaigns, their communication and then managing them with efficient and effective operational capabilities.

### Objectives of the study-

- 1) To study the awareness and popularity of gift cards with reference to IT industry
- 2) To explore the ways / techniques to promote concept of the gift cards & vouchers in IT & ITES industry
- 3) To understand the factors that play key role in purchase decision process for Gift Cards
- 4) To study the dimensions / attributes of the gift cards critical for its success as a corporate gifting instrument
- 5) To understand the importance, market potential & future of Gift Card business in retail industry



### Literature Review-

According to numerous surveys, most business gifts are given to major clients. After that comes an employee, then prospective clients. Reasons for gift giving range from thanking long-standing customers for their business to recognizing a valued employee for working on a weekend. The basic reason is the same: to affirm relationships and enhance the personal connection between giver and recipient.

But that doesn't mean there's no bottom-line benefit to be derived from corporate gift giving. For some companies, it's an essential part of their marketing strategy. And just about everyone agrees that, done correctly, gift giving is a cost-effective way to build a sense of partnership with valued associates.

#### *Consumer Behavior towards gifting*

*In various studies it is observed that, a gift card not only brings a gift to the recipient but also a whole set of different experiential factors. For example, when a recipient gets gifted with a gift card he or she goes to the retail store/shopping mall, they enjoy the atmosphere and ambience of the shopping place, crowd, music, colors, scent, visual effects and merchandising, may be some entertainment events/activities, feel the association with brand image, may be in the company of their spouses, friends, peers etc. Hence a gift card provides the recipient with a complete package of tangible gift and intangible experiential factors. These factors touch upon various behavioral and emotional attributes of human psychology.*

Consumer behavior is influenced by many things, including environmental and marketing factors, the situation, personal and psychological factors, family, and culture. Businesses try to figure out trends so they can reach the people most likely to buy their products in the most cost-effective way possible. Businesses often try to influence a consumer's behavior with things they can control such as the layout of a store, music, grouping and availability of products, pricing, and advertising. While some influences may be temporary and others are long lasting, different factors can affect how buyers behave—whether they influence you to make a purchase, buy additional products, or buy nothing at all.

Physical factors that firms can control, such as the layout of a store, music played at stores, the lighting, temperature, and even the smells you experience are called atmospherics. Research shows that “strategic fragrance” results in customers staying in stores longer, buying more, and leaving with better impressions of the quality of stores' services and products.

Crowding is another situational factor. Have you ever left a store and not purchased anything because it was just too crowded? Some studies have shown that consumers feel better about retailers who attempt to prevent overcrowding in their stores. However, other studies have shown that to a certain extent, crowding can have a positive impact on a person's buying experience. The phenomenon is often referred to as “herd behavior.” Carol J. Gaumer and William C. Leif, “Social Facilitation: Affect and Application in Consumer Buying Situations,” *Journal of Food Products Marketing* 11, no. 1 (2005): 75–82.

While demographic variables such as income, education, and marital status are important, we will look at gender, age, and stage of life and how they influence purchase decisions. Men and women need and buy different products. Cheryl B. Ward and Tran Thuhang, “Consumer Gifting Behaviors: One for You, One for me?” *Services Marketing Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2007): 1–17.

Also a number of research organizations examine lifestyle and psychographic characteristics of consumers. Psychographics combines the lifestyle traits of consumers and their personality styles with an analysis of their attitudes, activities, and values to determine groups of consumers with similar characteristics. One of the most widely used systems to classify people based on psychographics is the VALS (Values, Attitudes, and Lifestyles) framework. Using VALS to combine psychographics with demographic information such as marital status, education level, and income provide a better understanding of consumers.

### ***Perception and learning***

Perception is how you interpret the world around you and make sense of it in your brain. You do so via stimuli that affect your different senses—sight, visuals, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. How you combine these senses also makes a difference and Learning refers to the process by which consumers change their behavior after they gain information or experience. Hence People with limited experience about a product or brand generally seek out more information than people who have used a product before.

### *Gifts Vs Incentives*

To recognize what an effective and comprehensive gift strategy is, it helps to understand what it isn't. Prepaid gift cards are an increasingly popular tool to motivate and reward employees. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of recognition and rewards administrators use them in some capacity, says a new report by the Incentive Research Foundation. It can be started by making the distinction between corporate gift giving and incentive programs. Though gifts and incentive awards often have similar types of recipients, they differ on both a strategic and practical context. Gifts differ from incentives because they're offered with no explicit preconditions for performance. They differ from recognition in that they're not part of prescribed programs. Incentives are awards for achieving defined levels of activity, such as sales target, project deadlines, process improvements, good attendance etc. whereas, gifts are more or less spontaneous, not given as part of any defined arrangement and/or agreement between giver and recipient. The gift recipient doesn't consciously set goals in anticipation of a reward, whereas the incentive recipient does. Hence gift giving is a subtle, long-term process of relationship-building.

Gift giving is a wonderful way of showing care. The gifting market in India grew with the rise in per capita income and when the middle class got more aspiration about the kind of products they consume. According to the reports in 2013, Indian spent more than Rs. 3,000 crore on gift cards. According to estimates, the Indian gift card market would triple to Rs. 9,000 crores by 2017-18. Customers are excited to offer different branded gift cards to their friends and family on different occasions. Corporate world offer gift cards for rewards, recognition and incentives have increased aggressive demand in the market.

### *Emerging Trends in Gifting*

Traditionally, in India, gifting has been given a centre stage during festival season and marriages. However, technology is creating new benchmarks in the art of gifting. With the advent of the digital medium, the market has been migrated from manual (old-fashioned paper vouchers) to electronic transactions (prepaid gift cards) because store vouchers can limit the choice for the other person. While traditionally, the giver decided what they wanted to gift in due course of time access to social media, item search; breaking of geographical boundaries for gift delivery has brought the recipient in the centre stage of gifting.

The reasons behind this shift are-

- 1) improved control
- 2) increased consumer accessibility
- 3) availability and acceptance
- 4) reduced fraud
- 5) greater flexibility
- 6) New revenue opportunities.

After all, vouchers are for one-time use and have to be redeemed for the entire amount. This is why gift cards make for a more savvy choice. These are prepaid cards, which can be loaded for a certain amount, ranging from Rs 500-50,000. They are similar to debit cards and can be swiped at any brick-and-mortar or online store that accepts plastic. Another benefit is that you can swipe a gift card only for a partial value and use it multiple times till it is valid.

Here are some interesting and important gift card statistics for retailers to know: *Globally An average of \$1 billion in gift cards goes unredeemed annually.* What does this mean is nothing but “free money”. When there are tiny balances left on gift cards or recipients misplace them, the money still counts towards your revenue. This is a huge marketing point for those that have yet to embrace gift cards. Globally it is observed that 61% of gift cardholders spend more than the amount of the gift cards, with 75% of individuals spending more than 60% of the value of the original gift card.

Hence it's very easy and clear to interpret that Gift cards foster loyal customers that keep coming back. Selling a gift card means not only getting business but also winning a repeat customer. Blend a loyalty program to that and retailers can virtually guarantee a lifetime customer if the perks are planned properly. After all, 55% of gift card recipients require more than one shopping trip to spend the balance of their gift card.

This can easily put the total size of the gifting market in India to upwards of \$30 billion. The western world for ages has been practicing the idea of a gift registry for wedding gifts. However, this practice has not been followed in such an organized manner in India yet. Technology can help create a bridge between the aspirations of the gift recipient and the giver on a global basis around the world and India in particular. While the initial investment for equipment and card printing can be a cost center, the statistics clearly point towards great benefit for retailers.

Consumers have explored instant delivery and recognition for their favorite retail brands. All leading brands, across categories such as apparel, lifestyle, luxury accessories, food and beverage, cinema and entertainment are adding new variants to their gift card offerings. Retail chains like Lifestyle Stores, Shopper's Stop, Pacific Coffee, Pizza Hut, Benetton, Tanishq, Pantaloon and many others are engaging customers in innovative ways. They making the use of these programmes to drive incremental revenue through customer acquisition, increased visit frequency and increased average ticket size and bill values.

Although there's some hard evidence relating corporate gift giving to increased business activity, it probably won't give you the ability to make specific return-on-investment projections in your marketing plan.

Promotional Products Association International (PPAI) has conducted surveys of corporate gift givers and recipients. They have shown that vendors who gave were twice as likely to increase their chances of being contacted by recipients as those that didn't have a gift program.



According to Alistair Gorden, founder and MD, ValuAccess which provides creative branded stored value (prepaid) and customer intimacy (loyalty & CRM) programmes; “everyone has a gift and a duty to recognize this in themselves and others and retailers practice this everyday by adopting systems and services that help people look and feel at their confident best. These gift cards are the best gifts for any occasion or no occasion at all. It is a gift to make your internal and external customers feel special”.

### *Benefits of Gift Cards to Retailers and customers*

By using the gift card, the recipient can buy what he or she wants or suits to the recipient’s taste & choice, rather than be straddled with unwanted gifts that friends, family or employer straddle him with that go unused. Due to the lifestyle changes, the gifting is now about giving something that suits the taste and fulfills the needs of the receiver as he or she is free to use the way they want to, and using gift card becomes handy in such cases. Hence its real value for money and this flexibility a gift card offers is the driving force for the sector.



### *For Retailers*

- A great way to showcase your brand
- Front of wallet visibility
- Boost profit margins by Reducing return and exchange related costs
- Data and visibility- Connecting retailer’s users and products with targeted solutions
- Customer acquisition- Both gift buyers and recipients become new customers
- Increased revenue turnover- Through up selling and reducing cart abandonment
- POS display – no value on card until activation
- Increase brand awareness, purchasing frequency, ticket size and patronage behavior
- Secure and durable
- An interactive marketing tool
- Redeemable in-store and online
- Can be re-loaded
- Reduces overhead costs – voucher storage, print, money transfers
- Benefit from the ‘Float’ – remaining money on card
- Retailer can design the targeted email gift campaigns and reminders. Focus on Personalized and preferential gift sections which act as curator.
- Scope for Contextual gift up-selling and cross-selling

- Meeting your customers' gifting needs can create a good business driver for the retail store.

#### *For Consumer*

- Perfect solution for that last minute gift
- No need to guess size, color, design etc
- Delightful and personal gift redemption experience for recipient
- Recipient enjoys Flexible store credit options
- Recipients select the color they like, and size that fits, design and aesthetics they prefer
- A great way to give a gift
- Fits into a purse or wallet
- Secure and durable
- Easy and convenient
- Redeemable in-store and online
- Can be re-used
- Balance enquiries – in-store; online; telephone, Message

#### **Research Methodology**

1. Type of Research: Exploratory
2. Research Instrument- Questionnaire

**Questionnaire design:** As the questionnaire is self-administrated one, the survey is kept simple & user-friendly. Words used in questionnaire are readily understandable to all respondents. Also technical jargons are avoided to ensure that there will remain no confusion for respondents.

3. Sample unit: companies in IT & ITES industry in and around Pune
4. Sample Size: 50 (Refer Annexure I)
5. Data Source- Primary and Secondary data

**Primary data:** Primary data was collected through a self-administrated questionnaire. This questionnaire aims to gather the data related to popularity of gift cards among the HR and purchase managers.

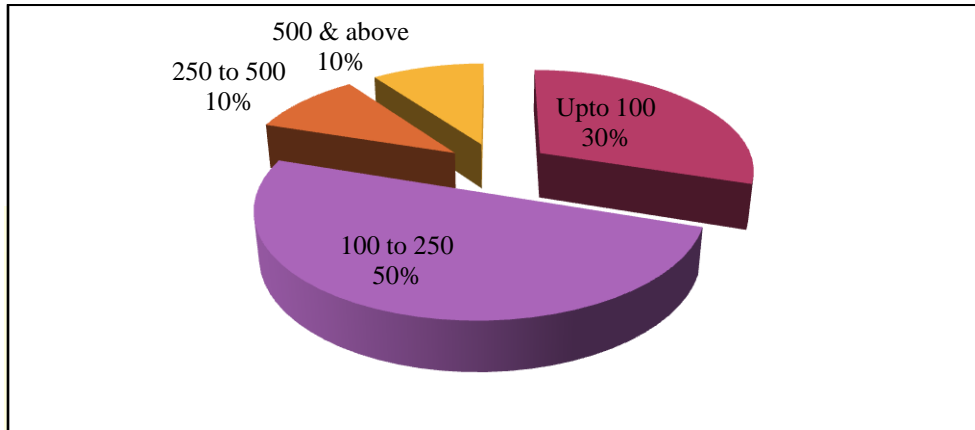
**Secondary Data:** Secondary data was collected through magazines, research papers, internet etc.

Researcher used both primary and secondary data for this research article. For primary data researcher used questioner-interview method and for secondary data researcher uses various other sources of information like magazines, newspaper articles, books and internet etc.

6. Method of Primary data collection- Personal & telephonic interview method
7. Sampling Region: Pune and suburban area

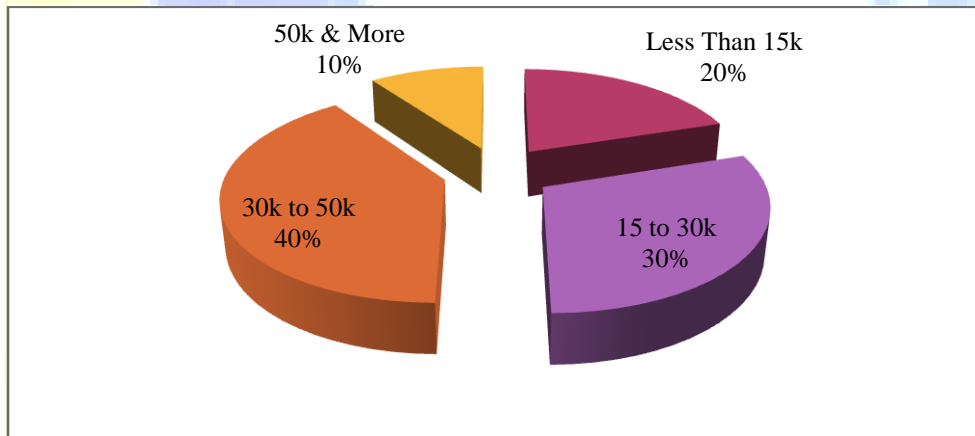
**Data Analysis**

**Que. 1-** Employee Strength of your organization



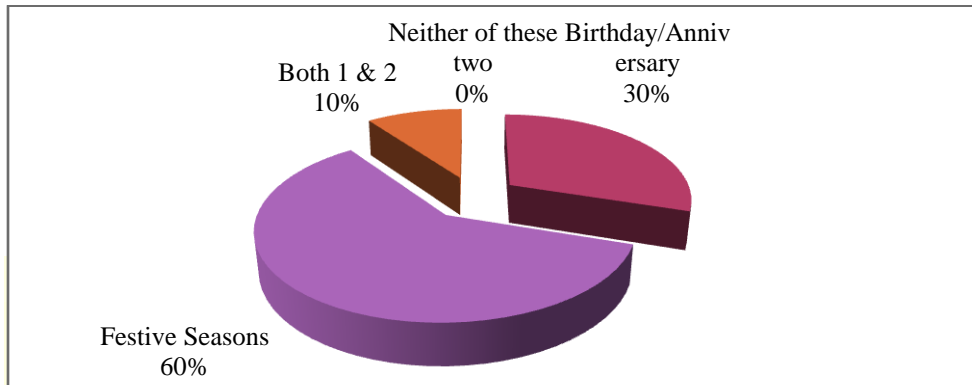
**Observation & Inference-** It is observed that 50% of the companies we surveyed have employee strength of 100 to 250 employees. Another 20% have the employee strength of 250 to 500. This shows a big opportunity for gift card business in IT & ITES industry in and around Pune region.

**Que. 2-** what is the average income of the employees



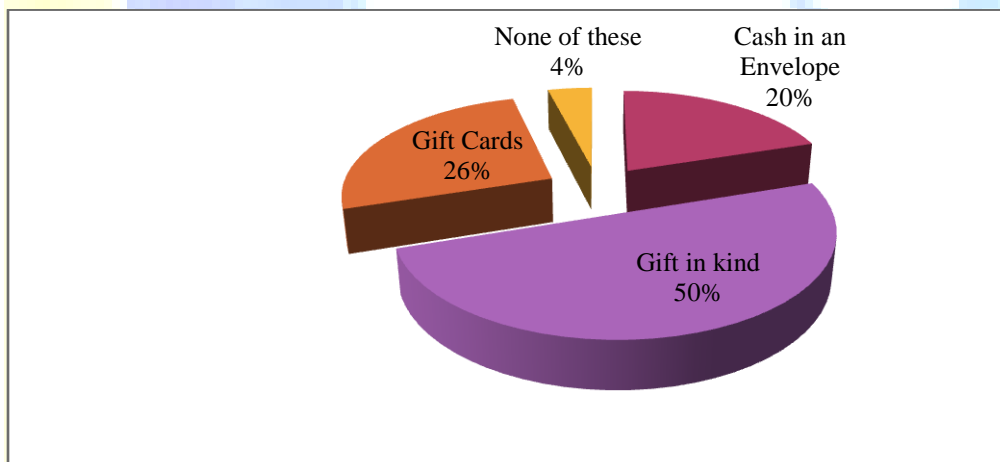
**Observation & Inference-** It can be observed that 40 % of employees of these companies lie in the salary band of Rs. 30,000 to 50,000 and 10% are getting salary above Rs. 50,000. This is a good sign of higher disposable income and higher aspiration level.

**Que. 3-** Occasion when you plan gift the gift cards



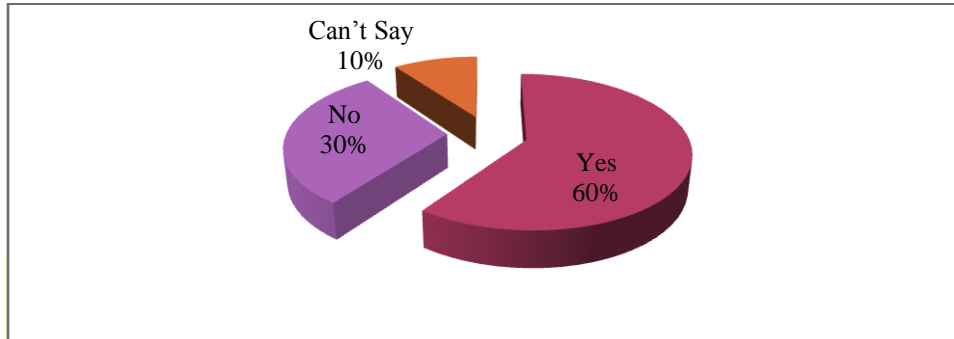
**Observation & Inference-** The graph shows that 60% of respondents say that their company does gifting to their employees during festivals and according to 30% on birthdays and anniversaries. Hence retailers catch this opportunity of festive season by offering customized card programs, loyalty incentives and other tangible and intangible benefits on the strong foundation of customer Relationship Programme.

**Que. 4-** The mode of gifting you prefer



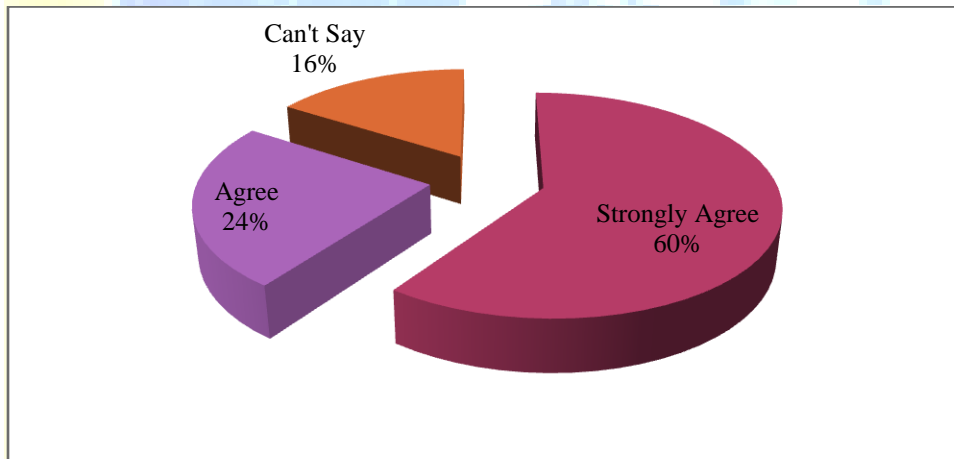
**Observation & Inference-** From the survey data it is observed that still only 26% of companies are gifting their employees in the form of a gift card while 50% of them are offering gifts in kind. Hence here the challenge for retailers is to drive the adoption of gift card as a gifting tool among these corporate consumers. This can be achieved by focusing on effective business development activities and tools.

**Que. 5-** Do you think that gifting is a time consuming process



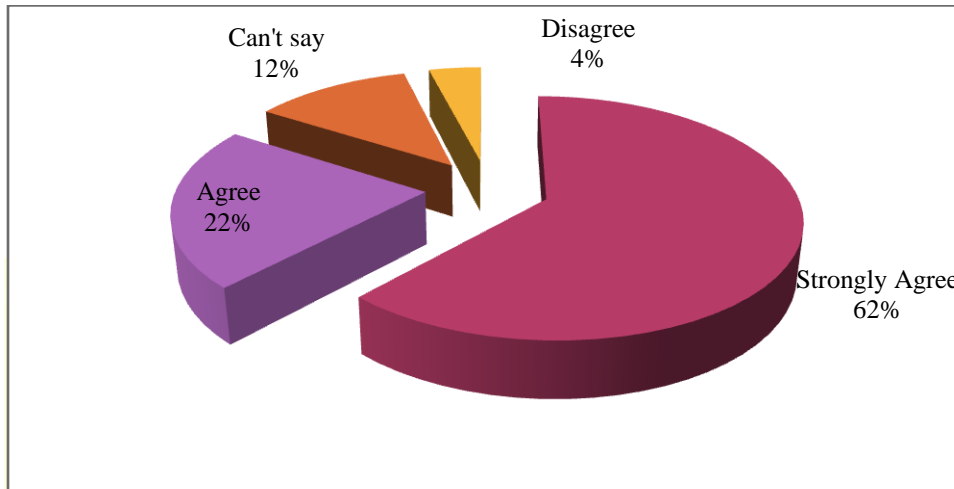
**Observation & Inference-** 60% of respondents admit that gifting is a time consuming process. This is an area that provides an opportunity for retailers to put forward their gift cards as a time saving and value for money option.

**Que. 6-** Do you think that Gift card is comparatively more motivating instrument than incentive for recognizing and/or appreciating employees



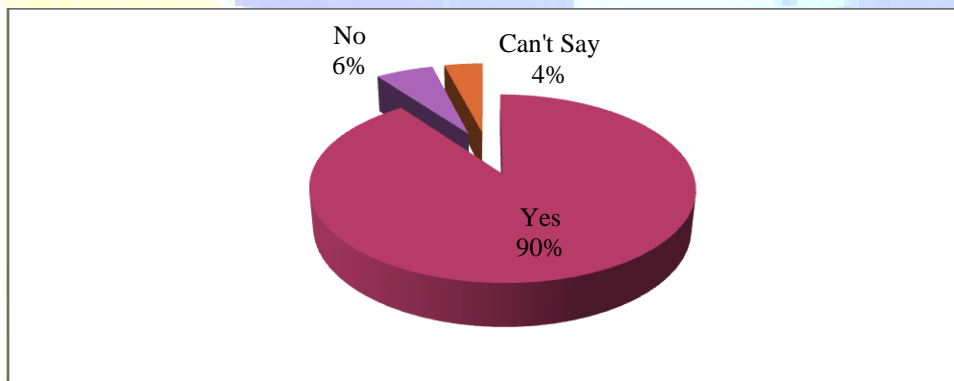
**Observation & Inference-** It can be observed that 60% strongly agree and 24% agree with the statement that Gift card is comparatively more motivating instrument than incentive for recognizing and/or appreciating employees.

**Que. 7-** Do you think that Strong Private Label brands is one of factor that influences the decision making while purchasing Gift Cards to add exclusivity quotient to the Gift



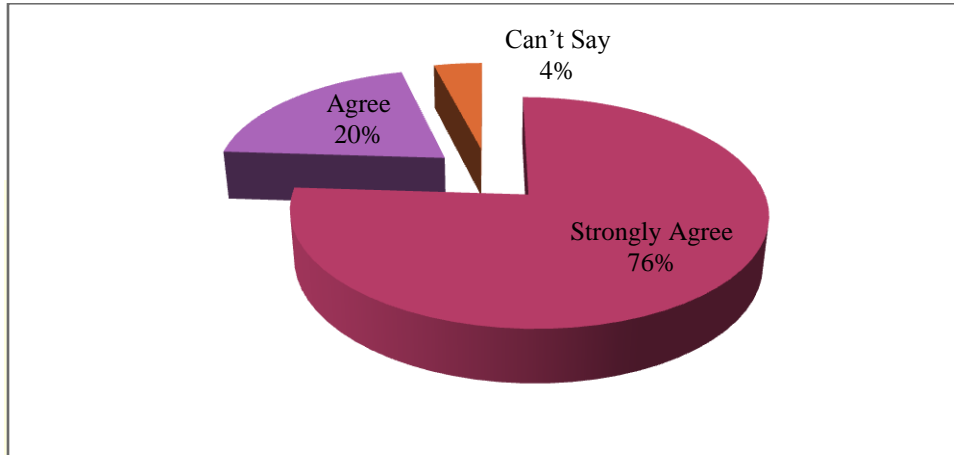
**Observation & Inference-** It is observed that 84% of respondents opine that Strong Private Label brands is one of factor that influences the decision making while purchasing Gift Cards to add exclusivity quotient to the Gift. Hence retailers can take a note here that; strong private label brands which are exclusively available with them can become a USP for their gift cards also, as the recipients can use these gift cards to buy their favorite private label brands.

**Que. 8-** Do you think that retailer's brand image is one of the factors that influences the decision making while purchasing Gift Cards



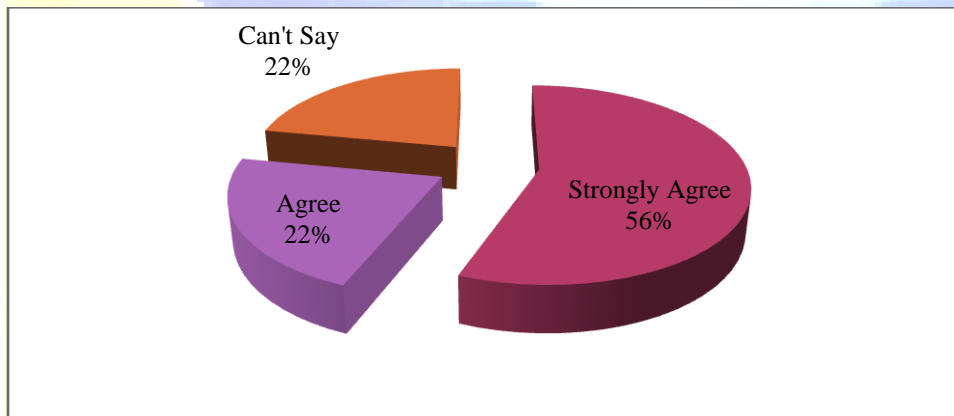
**Observation & Inference-** A whopping 90% of the respondents think that retailer's brand image is one of the factors that influence the decision making while purchasing Gift Cards. This can be attributed to the fact that rising; per capita income levels and disposable income levels; with changing lifestyle, the middle class has got more aspiration which reflects in their shopping and purchasing behavior. Here the employers are wooing them by gifting them with gift cards of retailers with high brand image to motivate them and to make them feel; being recognized in a desired manner.

**Que. 9-** Do you think that retail store's physical environment/ambient factors and visual merchandising are some of the other major factors that influences the decision making while purchasing Gift Cards



**Observation & Inference-** 96% of the respondents agree with the fact that retail store's physical environment/ambient factors and visual merchandising are some of the other major factors that play crucial role in the decision making towards Gift Cards purchase.

**Que. 10-** Do you think that an effective CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and Loyalty reward programme oriented with the gift card adds value to the Gift and recognized by recipient.



**Observation & Inference-** 78% of the respondents feel that an effective CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and Loyalty reward programme oriented with the gift card adds value to the Gift and recognized by recipient.

*Hence retailers need to give a special emphasize on educating its customers about its CRM programme during the preaching of gift cards. It can be regarded as a strategic component in promotion of gift cards in corporate clients.*

## Conclusion-

With the changing consumer behavior towards retail brands, the availability of data that can drive meaningful insights and intelligence is also changing. Retailers who can delight their customers across all contact points and occasions will build relationships that will deliver incremental revenue. The propensity towards personalization, recognition, participation through two-way communication and various engagements is bringing a lot of difference in the behavior of consumers towards their favorite brands.

- 1) The other important factors that a retailer need to focus on are
  - a) The study shows that Strong Private Label Brands influence the purchase decision process for Gift cards of retailer in a positive way as these brands are exclusively available with that retailer. Today private label brands embody the attitude and demeanor of an “own” brand. “Private Labels” are relevant to the broadest set of audiences. The consumer is loyal to “own” brands and seeks them out as an integral part of his/her lifestyle which nourish there association and connects them with the brand persona. The retailer, in turn, celebrates and nurtures the “Private Label” brand as a vital embodiment of its brand proposition that will build and sustain a greater degree of loyalty.

*This in turn also helps the retailers in creating a value proposition for its Gift Cards and adds the exclusivity quotient to the Gift offered.*

- b) The study shows that there is a significant impact of brand image and visual merchandising & Physical environment on the purchase decision process of Gift cards. Visual Merchandising helps retailer to attract the customers, towards the displayed products and physical environment and ambient factors improves the shopping experience for customer by sending the right message about the merchandize and presenting it in a unique manner with effective creative quotient.

*This in turn helps the retailers in creating a value proposition for its Gift Cards and adds the creativity quotient to the Gift offered.*

- c) The study also shows that the brand image of the retailer is also a critical factor in the decision making for purchasing the Gift cards and a good or great brand image positively influences the same. A retailer’s image is how the public perceives the company. An image represents how the retailer is perceived by consumers and others. A firm may be seen as innovative or conservative, specialized or broad-based, discount-oriented or upscale- high end luxury brand etc. Retail brand positioning relates to where a retailer situates itself in the consumer’s mind. This positioning guides all other decisions about how the retailer satisfies its target customers while differentiating itself from competitors.

*This in turn helps the retailers in creating a value proposition for its Gift Cards and adds the sense of pride, achievement and a feel of image association to the Gift offered.*



- 2) The fusion of gift card programmes and Customer relationship management creates instant, relevant and perceived value for the customers, which needs to grow from being a simple 'rewards for purchase' scheme to something more sophisticated by way of recognizing customers and better brand involvement.
- 3) Hence when these gift card programmes designed, tailored and implemented to fit the retailer's offerings leads to increased revenues, acquire new customers, expand brand reach and build stronger relationships.

### Recommendations for retailers-

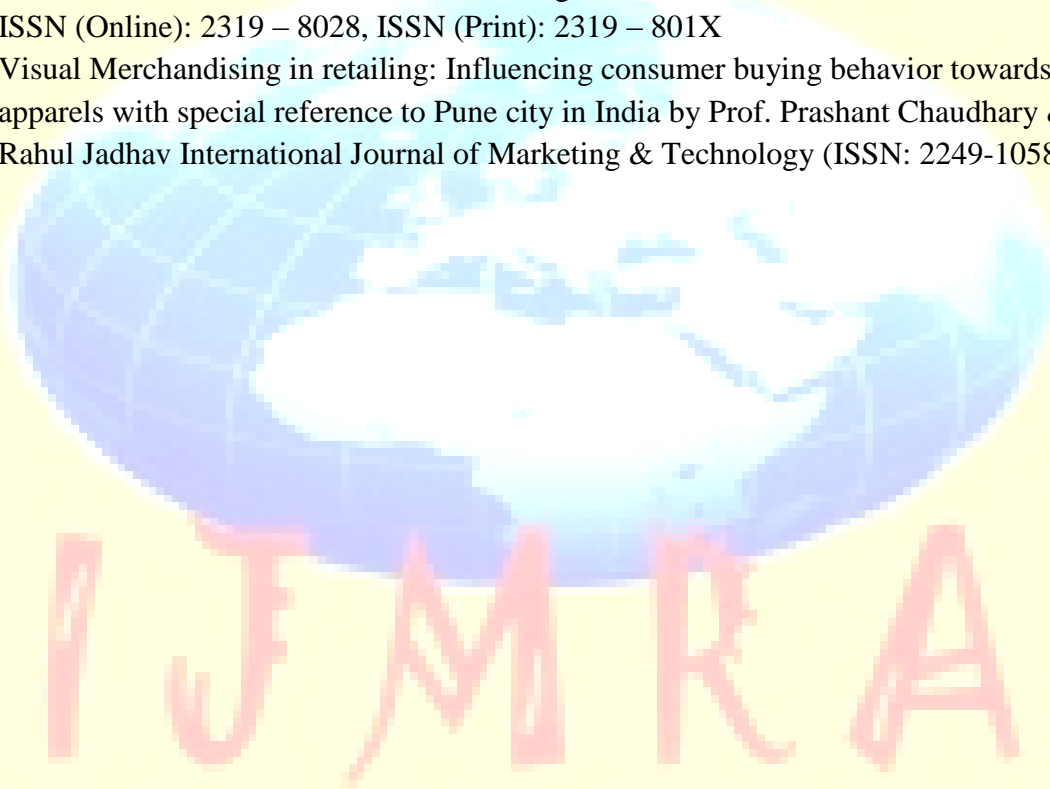
After closely observing the buying behavior of corporations towards the gift cards of retailers and integrating these behavioral factors with the general gifting trends and receivers gift card usage behavior, the researchers draws upon some recommendations for retailers from all over the globe to increase their gift card business. These recommendations are based on both the primary and secondary data and information that researchers have obtained during this research project.

1. Retailers need to develop their gift card sales message that is consistent with their brand image and positioning. Then keep it consistent across all marketing channels -in-store, online, on social media and in print.
2. Message copy, design and visual presentation should be in harmony; so that, like their brand, it will elicit an emotional response - familiar to their customers, as they will receive the same messaging consistently.
3. When consumers become familiar with retailer's brand message, they create a positive association with the brand and remember and recall it more easily. So the next time they need a gift card, it will be the first in their mind.
4. Retailers need to give wide exposure and promotion to their gift card. This can be done at Point-of-purchase display, eye-catching window signage, badges on sales personal's shirts, in the form of profile picture on the social media account of the retailer etc. can help to spread their message throughout their brick-and-mortar.
5. Retailers need to train their sales people to preach for the gift card to the customers during the checkout process or it can train them to educate and guide the customers regarding the gift card programme. To motivate the sales people to the retailer can incentivize them to perform in this direction.
6. Retailer can also extend their message to their online store by adding it to the checkout process -"would you like to add a gift card in your shopping cart?"- Or may be within their order confirmation and/or delivery confirmation/schedule emails.

7. Retailers can keep this activity going all year long, especially during the weekends, End of Season Sales, during other ATL and BTL marketing activities and events.
8. Today almost every corporate retailer offers a loyalty programme; hence to delight the customers the retailer can offer loyalty points on top of the incentive to up lure and reward their loyal customers.
9. Today by blending loyalty programme with the gift card, retailer can get the “goldmine” of customer data that they can expedite over the duration of relationship with customers. That data typically includes information regarding purchasing on gift card. Using this valuable information, the retailer can create a targeted and focused marketing campaign that will entice these former gift card purchasers to purchase again. The message should be created to resonate specifically with these prospective customers and the offer should be powerful enough to prompt an on-the-spot conversion.
10. In a world of man-to-man marketing, we all want to feel as though something is created exclusively for us. Gift cards are no exception. Consumers feel delighted to receive personalized gifts and a personalized gift card will help to achieve the desired effect. It can be simple personalization, such as just a personal message on the card holder or a name embossed to the face of the card, or more complex, such as allowing the customer to upload an image online and that will be printed on the card. You may have limitations in this area, however, you can partner with technology supporters that provides this kind of innovative solutions.
11. While promoting or offering gift card to other businesses and corporations to use as employee incentives, sales incentives, client gifts, retention & loyalty program gifts, thank you gifts and more, the retailer can personalize the cards by providing prepaid cards that allow companies to brand the card body with company logos, holiday wishes, congratulatory messages, the names of winners etc.

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**Annexure I-**

List of the Companies the researchers approached for the survey.

Sr. No.	Name of the organization	Sr. No.	Name of the organization
1	Birlamedisoft Private Limited	26	Nord Drivesystems
2	Gallagher Offshore Services India Pvt Ltd	27	Emerson
3	Zamil Information Technology Global Pvt Ltd	28	Chrysalis
4	Synechron Technologies Pvt. Ltd	29	Emitec
5	Zensar Technologies Ltd.	30	Cytel
6	Tieto Software Technologies Pvt. Ltd	31	Persistent Systems
7	Automotive Navigation Data	32	AgroStar
8	Johnson & Johnson	33	Extentia Information Technology
9	ACI payment system	34	Marlabs
10	Nalco	35	Grupo Antolin
11	Decos Software Development	36	All Scripts
12	Marsh	37	Yash Technologies
13	Accord	38	Reflexis Systems
14	Survik Software Ltd	39	Dresser Rand
15	Mithi Software Technologies	40	Synechron Technologies Pvt. Ltd
16	Adaptive	41	WIKA Instruments India Pvt. Ltd
17	Posco Isdc	42	Amdocs
18	LightO Technologies	43	John Deere
19	C3IT S/w Solutions	44	HSBC Software
20	BlueBell Ergonomics	45	Barclays
21	FinIQ	46	Maersk
22	T/DG(The Digital Group)	47	Syntel
23	Johnson Controls	48	Tavisca Solutions Pvt. Ltd
24	Honeywell	49	Ignify
25	ATOS	50	WhiteHedge Technologies Pvt. Ltd