CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, deemed most appropriate for exploring complex, context-specific phenomena such as the integration of logistics and marketing strategies during peak e-commerce seasons. The qualitative approach enables an in-depth exploration of lived experiences, organizational practices, and strategic decision-making within Amazon DTM8 Krefeld—insights that would be difficult to obtain through purely quantitative methods (Creswell, 2014). By examining both operational execution and customer perception, this approach facilitates a holistic understanding of how delivery speed and seasonal promotions are deployed to enhance customer satisfaction during periods of heightened demand.

The descriptive design aims to systematically and accurately portray the strategies implemented at Amazon DTM8 without manipulating the environment or imposing pre-existing hypotheses. This approach is well-suited for capturing nuanced realities through rich, narrative data obtained from in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. In doing so, the research provides detailed accounts of how various actors—warehouse managers, marketing staff, and customers—perceive and respond to strategic interventions during the peak season.

Unlike approaches bound by rigid theoretical models, the qualitative descriptive method allows the research to remain flexible and responsive to emergent themes in the field. This is particularly important in understanding the dynamic interplay between fulfillment speed, promotional tactics, and customer satisfaction, which unfolds uniquely in high-pressure retail environments.

3.2 Research Location and Time

The research was conducted at Amazon Distribution Center DTM8, located in Krefeld, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. As one of Amazon's major fulfillment centers in Europe, DTM8 plays a critical role in processing and dispatching high volumes of customer orders, particularly during peak retail periods. This makes it an ideal setting for examining strategies related to delivery speed and seasonal discounts.

The study focused on operations during the peak season of 2023, spanning from October to December 2023. This period encompasses key commercial events such as Halloween, Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and the Christmas holidays, where demand surges significantly, presenting unique operational challenges and opportunities.

The researcher's direct participation through a three-month internship at the study location also allowed for immersive, participatory observation. This dual role as participant and observer enabled access to primary data through authentic, on-site experience.

Data collection activities, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, were carried out exclusively during this peak season timeframe. Concentrating the research within this period ensured the relevance and immediacy of the findings, allowing for a direct assessment of operational practices and their impact on customer satisfaction during the most critical months of the retail calendar.

3.3 Data Sources

The data utilized in this study were obtained from two primary categories: primary data and secondary data, applying a triangulation approach to enhance the credibility and depth of the findings.

a. Primary Data

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation.

1. In-depth Interviews: Interviews were semi-structured to allow the flexibility of exploring key issues in depth. Three informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in Amazon DTM8 operations during the 2023 peak season. These included:
    - One Customer: Providing insights into customer satisfaction related to delivery speed and seasonal promotions.
    - One Operational Manager: Overseeing logistics and fulfillment activities, offering perspectives on the execution of fast delivery strategies.
    - One Marketing Manager: Responsible for planning and implementing seasonal discount initiatives to drive customer engagement.
2. Participant Observation: The researcher conducted participant observation while interning at Amazon DTM8 during the peak season (October–December 2023). This immersive engagement enabled the researcher to observe operational processes, promotional activities, and customer interaction firsthand, providing contextual understanding of real-time practices and challenges.

b. Secondary Data

Secondary data were used to complement and validate the primary findings by providing a broader organizational, academic, and industry-level perspective. In qualitative research, triangulating different data sources is essential for improving credibility and analytical depth. The secondary data were collected through document and literature analysis and include two types:

- Organizational and Industry Reports
    1. Amazon Annual Report (2023): Provides detailed information on Amazon's operational performance, customer satisfaction initiatives, and service quality standards during the fiscal year.

2. PwC Global Consumer Insights Survey (2023): Offers insights into global consumer behavior, expectations on delivery services, and attitudes toward promotional offers in e-commerce.
3. McKinsey Retail Report (2022): Analyzes retail industry trends, with specific focus on logistics efficiency and promotional strategies impacting customer loyalty.
4. RetailMeNot Holiday Insights Report (2022): Discusses the impact of seasonal promotions and discounts on consumer purchasing behavior during peak retail periods.
5. Amazon Press Releases (October–December 2023): Provide timely updates on Amazon's promotional campaigns, operational strategies, and shipping performance during the 2023 peak season.

- **Previous Academic Research**

  In addition to the reports above, this study incorporates academic journal articles and scholarly literature that explore the effects of delivery speed, promotional strategies, and logistics coordination on customer satisfaction. These previous studies, reviewed in Chapter II, not only provide theoretical grounding but also serve as **secondary data** for empirical comparison and validation of field findings. They help strengthen the conceptual framework and ensure that the proposed IPSM model is both contextually grounded and supported by broader academic discourse.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

a. Data Collection Techniques

This research utilized multiple qualitative data collection techniques to ensure the richness and validity of the findings. The methods applied included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. By integrating these three data collection techniques, the study employed a triangulation approach

that strengthens the trustworthiness, credibility, and depth of the research findings.

1. In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with three key informants selected through purposive sampling. These included one customer, one operational manager, and one marketing manager at Amazon DTM8 Krefeld. The interviews were designed to explore participants' experiences and perspectives regarding delivery speed strategies, seasonal discount programs, and their impact on customer satisfaction during the 2023 peak season.

   Interview guides comprising open-ended questions were used to maintain consistency while allowing flexibility to probe deeper into emerging themes.
2. Participant Observation: The researcher engaged in participant observation by serving as an intern at Amazon DTM8 during the peak season from October to December 2023. This role enabled the researcher to directly observe daily operational activities, logistics workflows, promotional program implementations, and customer service practices. Observational data provided contextual depth, capturing real-time interactions, operational challenges, and strategic adjustments during the high-demand period.
3. Document Analysis: Secondary data were collected by systematically analyzing relevant internal and external documents. These included the Amazon Annual Report (2023), PwC Global Consumer Insights Survey (2023), McKinsey Retail Report (2022), RetailMeNot Holiday Insights Report (2022), and Amazon press releases from October to December 2023. Document analysis complemented primary data by providing organizational perspectives, industry trends, and

supporting evidence regarding operational strategies and customer satisfaction outcomes.

b. Data Processing and Analysis

a. Interviews and Documentary Study: The collected data will be analyzed using a qualitative approach to identify themes and key patterns that emerge from the interviews and documents. This analysis will include coding the data, grouping themes, and interpreting the results to answer the research questions.

b. Observation: Observational data will be collected and analyzed to provide additional insights into the implementation of policies and their effects on customer experiences.

c. Ethical Considerations

a. Consent: All interview participants will be provided with clear information regarding the research objectives and will be asked for their consent before data collection.

b. Confidentiality: The data collected will be kept confidential and used solely for the purposes of this research.

3.5 Research Instruments

The research instruments in this study are designed to collect relevant and in-depth data regarding the influence of shipping speed and seasonal discounts on customer satisfaction at Amazon DTM8 Krefeld. The instruments used include an interview guide, observation form, and document checklist.

3.5.1 Interview Guide

This research utilizes a semi-structured interview guide to collect in-depth and contextual data from respondents. The interview questions are designed to explore the impact of delivery speed and seasonal discount strategies on customer satisfaction at Amazon DTM8, Krefeld, Germany during the peak season. The interview guide is divided based on the type of respondent:

a. Interview Guide for Operational Manager

1. How did Amazon DTM8 prepare operationally to handle the order surge during the 2023 peak season?
2. What specific strategies were implemented to ensure faster delivery times during this period?
3. Were there significant changes in routing, staffing, or technology applied during the peak season?
4. How does the operations team evaluate the success of the delivery speed strategy?
5. What were the biggest challenges faced in maintaining fast delivery performance during peak seasons, and how were they overcome?
6. In your view, how important is the synchronization between fast delivery and seasonal promotional programs for customer satisfaction?
7. How did the operations team collaborate with the marketing team to support promotional periods logistically?
8. Based on your observation, did the combination of faster delivery and attractive discounts contribute significantly to improving customer satisfaction?
9. What operational improvements do you think can be further developed for future peak seasons?
10. Is there anything you would recommend to optimize delivery performance without compromising service quality during high-demand periods?

b. Interview Guide for Marketing Manager

1. What types of promotional campaigns did Amazon DTM8 run during the 2023 peak season?
2. How were products selected to be included in special promotions or discount programs?

3. How important was the role of seasonal promotions (e.g., Lightning Deals, Prime Exclusives) in driving customer purchases during peak season?
4. How were the discount percentages determined (e.g., 20%, 40%, etc.)? Was there a specific strategy behind it?
5. Were different customer segments (e.g., Prime members vs non-members) targeted differently during peak season promotions?
6. How did the marketing team coordinate with the operations/logistics team to ensure stock availability for discounted products?
7. Were there any challenges in aligning marketing campaigns with actual delivery capabilities?
8. How did marketing adjust promotions in real-time based on inventory levels and delivery performance?
9. How did you measure the success of the seasonal discount campaigns? (e.g., increase in sales, customer satisfaction scores)
10. How did customer feedback or behavior influence marketing strategies during the peak season?
11. Based on your analysis, how important was the combination of fast delivery and promotional pricing in improving customer satisfaction?
12. Do you believe that seasonal discounts helped increase customer loyalty to Amazon?
13. What new promotional strategies would you recommend for future peak seasons to further enhance customer satisfaction?
14. Were there any lessons learned from the 2023 peak season that will influence future marketing approaches at Amazon DTM8?

c. Interview Guide for Customer

1. What motivated you to shop on Amazon during the seasonal sale?
2. How was your experience with the delivery speed?
3. How much did the discounts influence your decision to buy?
4. How did you feel when your product arrived earlier than expected?
5. Overall, were you satisfied with your shopping experience? Why?
6. Do you think the combination of fast delivery and discounts influenced your decision to return and shop again?
7. What part of the experience was most satisfying to you?
8. Is there anything you think Amazon could improve?

3.5.2 Observation Form

The observation form is used to record direct observations of various processes at Amazon DTM8 Krefeld. This form helps in capturing important aspects of the implementation of shipping speed and seasonal discounts. Aspects Observed:

1. The management process of shipping speed.
2. The implementation and communication of seasonal discounts to customers.
3. Interactions between staff and customers regarding shipping services and discounts.
4. Service quality and customer satisfaction based on direct observations.

3.5.3 Document Checklist

The document checklist ensures that all relevant secondary sources were systematically collected and reviewed to support the primary data findings. The selected documents provided organizational insights, industry benchmarks, and customer behavior trends relevant to the research focus. Documents Reviewed:

1. Amazon Annual Report (2023) — covering operational performance, customer service initiatives, and delivery strategy outcomes during the peak season.
2. PwC Global Consumer Insights Survey (2023) — presenting consumer expectations on e-commerce delivery speed and promotional responsiveness.
3. McKinsey Retail Report (2022) — analyzing retail logistics trends, customer loyalty drivers, and operational best practices.
4. RetailMeNot Holiday Insights Report (2022) — detailing consumer behavior patterns regarding seasonal promotions and holiday shopping preferences.
5. Amazon Press Releases (October–December 2023) — providing official updates on Amazon's promotional campaigns, peak season operational strategies, and shipping performance announcements.

3.5.4 Procedure for Using Instruments

The instruments will be developed based on relevant literature and research objectives to ensure that the collected data is accurate and pertinent. A pilot test of the instruments will be conducted on a small scale to assess their effectiveness before full implementation in data collection. During data collection, the instruments will be applied systematically to gather comprehensive information.

3.5.5 Ethical Considerations

The research instruments will be used in accordance with high ethical standards, including obtaining consent from participants and ensuring the confidentiality of the collected data.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis techniques in this study aim to process and analyze data collected from interviews, observations, and documents.

a. Qualitative Analysis

Data from interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves several steps:

1. Data Coding: The first step involves manually coding the data to identify key categories.
2. Theme Identification: Next, themes will be identified from the interview results related to the variables of shipping speed, seasonal discounts, and customer satisfaction.
3. Theme Interpretation: Finally, the identified themes will be interpreted to understand the relationships between variables. This process will be conducted systematically to ensure that each insight generated is relevant to the research objectives. To aid the thematic analysis process, NVivo 14 software was used to code interview transcripts, observation field notes, and documents. The software enabled the identification of recurring themes and supported visual analysis using tools such as word frequency charts and conceptual mind maps. This helped the researcher triangulate findings and present the data in a more structured and valid form.

b. Descriptive Analysis

Data from observations and documents will be analyzed descriptively to provide an overview of the implementation of shipping policies and seasonal discounts, as well as their impact on customer satisfaction. This analysis will help illustrate how these elements are perceived and experienced by customers during the peak season.

c. Data Triangulation

To enhance the validity of the findings, triangulation will be performed by comparing results from interviews, observations, and documents. This approach aims to confirm conclusions and obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being studied. By integrating multiple data sources, the study seeks to ensure that the insights gained are robust and well-supported. For instance, customer feedback on shipping delays will be compared with internal documents on peak season logistics performance to assess consistency in reported challenges and solutions.

3.7 Research Stages

The research stages include the following steps:

1. Research Preparation: Drafting the research proposal, obtaining permissions, and preparing research instruments.
2. Data Collection: Conducting interviews with customers and managers, observing on-site, and collecting related documents.
3. Data Analysis: Processing data from interviews, observations, and documents using qualitative and descriptive analysis techniques.
4. Results Interpretation: Compiling findings based on data analysis and linking them to the theoretical framework.
5. Report Writing: Preparing the research report, including the introduction, literature review, methods, results, and conclusions.
6. Presentation and Evaluation: Presenting research results to supervisors and committees to obtain feedback and making revisions if necessary.

3.8 Research Schedule

This research is planned to take place over a period of 3 months with the following details:

Table 3.1 Research Schedule

Month	Activity
Month 1	**Preparation and Instrument Testing** 1. Drafting and approval of the proposal 2. Development and pilot testing of instruments
Month 2	**Data Collection** 1. Interviews with customers and managers 2. Observations and document collection
Month 3	**Data Analysis and Report Writing** 1. Data analysis and interpretation 2. Preparation of the research report