

# For a good bargain online

Online shopping need not rob you of those attractive deals on bulk purchases. Web sites now allow you to become part of a group with exactly that in mind.

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**H**ow many times have you teamed up with friends to shop at the local bazaar, buying in bulk and bargaining for a good discount? Or even better, bought 50 copies of a bestseller for all your classmates who were keen on owning one, and ended up with a great deal or even a gift voucher?

The 'bulk buying' concept has now gone online thanks to new ventures launched by retail enthusiasts and the power of social networking. Web sites now allow online shoppers to indulge in group buying by identifying like-minded shoppers on the site. They can click and choose the products of their choice and avail themselves of discounts of up to 80 per cent.

Such group-based social e-commerce buying services appear to be touching off a new shopping trend in the country.

**TAPPING THE 'SPIRIT OF BARGAINING'**  
These Web sites have developed simple yet innovative models that target the shopper's inherent desire to look out for good deals.

While each Web site follows its own format, such shopping is geared to forming groups online with members of the Web site so as to get a great deal.

While MyDala displays its deals for the day, which require a minimum number of takers in 24 hours for all of them to avail themselves of the deal, others such as ShoppingReps allow consumers to be part of groups such as Dell Inspiron 15, where members who want to buy a laptop join the group for a bulk discount.

Though the majority of group-buying Web sites restrict themselves to online shopping, ShoppingReps goes a step ahead by allowing you to visit the store personally to buy the product you bargained for. They 'collect quotations from randomly chosen group members for their respective groups. Each group has its own pool of quotes submitted by group members. The Web platform evaluates and picks the best quotes from the pools and serves them back to the respective groups.'

#### THE WHOLE GAMUT

What makes it even better for shoppers is the number of products and services one can shop for in this format.



From gadgets to shoes, cars to washing machines, farm machines to language courses, beauty treatments to salsa classes, restaurant vouchers and lots more, one has plenty of options to choose from, depending on the Web site.

While this spells good news for buyers, for the product or service owners, known as 'vendors' or 'merchants,' the Web site serves as a good platform to ensure minimum sales.

Anisha Singh, Founder-CEO, mydala.com explains, "The local businesses we promote get tremendous visibility, paid customer

footfalls, access to new customers and the site helps build their reach and loyalty.

We've seen incredible enthusiasm among our business partners. We are focused on bringing deals to our customers from local businesses that provide the best of what our cities have to offer: restaurants, spas, shopping, events and recreation."

#### GROWING NUMBERS

The response to this shopping format has been encouraging. Singh adds that since the site's launch in November 2009, it has sold



**All together now:** Placing bulk orders and getting attractive deals on the Net. — M.MOORTHY

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532 vouchers and helped its customers save Rs 2.4 lakh.

Udhayakumar Chinnayan of www.ShoppingReps.com says, "In the past 10 months, we have promoted the site on several marketing fronts. There are currently 1,700 registered users and they have raised around 250 purchase intentions. We have been able to form several groups and requested group members to submit the quotations collected from their local stores. More students are joining our band these days."

While MyDala has seen a lot of takers for

their restaurant, event and movie deals, ShoppingReps has seen increasing demand for discounted educational courses and bikes from the student community.

The service is set to be offered in other cities as well. The Delhi-based MyDala is launching in Mumbai and Bangalore early this year and other cities will follow. Udhayakumar of ShoppingReps hopes to expand to other cities in India, the US and European countries after trials in Chennai and other South Indian cities.

Haggling sure has gotten a makeover!