hey tomo

E-BOOK · 8 CHAPTERS

The Festive Season Playbook: Diwali to New Year



Introduction

For many Indian businesses, the stretch from Navratri to New Year is the busiest of the year. Customers are buying gifts, clothes, sweets, electronics and home things. They are also getting more messages than at any other time. The businesses that do well are the ones that plan early, ask permission early, and then send fewer, better messages at the right moments.

This e-book walks through the season in order: drawing up your calendar, building your list and consent before the rush, countdown and early-access journeys, back-in-stock and gifting reminders, keeping customers informed when orders pile up, saying thank you afterwards, and bringing back the people who did not buy. It ends with the two habits that protect everything else: not over-messaging, and measuring with a holdout so you know what really worked.

Every promotional message in this e-book is marketing. It goes only to customers who agreed to hear from you, never to anyone under 18, and never during quiet hours. Order and delivery updates are service messages, and we say so where it matters.

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CHAPTER

01

Draw up your season calendar



The festive season is not one event. It is a run of festivals, each with its own mood, its own shoppers and its own lead time. Start by putting them on one page.

The big dates

- **Navratri and Dussehra.** Nine nights of garba and dandiya in many places, then Dussehra. Clothing, jewellery, beauty and event services are busy. Many families also start Diwali shopping here.
- **Diwali.** The peak for most categories: sweets and dry fruits, gifts, home decor, lights, clothing, electronics, gold and silver around Dhanteras, and corporate gifting in the weeks before.
- **Bhai Dooj.** A day or two after Diwali. Gifts between brothers and sisters, often bought at the last minute.
- **Christmas.** Cakes, bakeries, cafés, gifts, and parties in many cities.
- **New Year.** Restaurants, events, travel, gyms and coaching centres, which see a rush of "this year I will" resolutions in early January.

Regional festivals

India does not celebrate on one calendar. Onam in Kerala, Durga Puja in Bengal and the east, Chhath, Karva Chauth, Guru Nanak Jayanti, and Pongal, Sankranti and Lohri in January all matter to the customers who celebrate them. If you serve a mixed city or ship across India, use what you know about each customer (their city, what they bought last year, what they told you) rather than sending everyone the same greeting.

Check the dates every year

Most of these festivals follow the lunar calendar, so their dates move from year to year. Look them up for the coming season and put them in your plan before you write a single message.

Work backwards from each date

For each festival you care about, write down four things:

1. **The buying window**
   When do your customers actually buy for this festival? Sweets may sell in the last three days. Clothes and gold may sell two weeks earlier. Corporate gifts are often decided a month ahead.
2. **Your last safe order date**
   If you deliver, when is the last day an order can arrive in time? This drives your countdown messages.
3. **Your stock and staff limits**
   What can you really make, pack and deliver? Do not promote what you cannot fulfil.
4. **What you will send**
   One or two moments per festival, not a message every day. We cover which moments in the chapters that follow.

A simple calendar for a sweet shop might have only four marketing moments across the whole season: a Navratri gift-box preview, a Diwali pre-order reminder, a last-day-to-order note before Bhai Dooj, and a New Year thank-you. That is enough.

CHAPTER

02 Build your list and consent early



The worst time to grow your list is in the middle of Diwali week. Customers are busy, your staff are busy, and anyone you add then gets your messages cold. Start four to six weeks before the season.

Where to ask

- **At the counter.** A QR code by the billing desk that opens a WhatsApp chat with a pre-filled line such as "Yes, send me festive offers from Sri Ganesh Sweets". The customer sends it, so the agreement is clear and recorded.
- **On your website or store.** A tick box (never pre-ticked) at checkout that says exactly what they will get: "Send me festive offers and early access on WhatsApp".
- **In your app.** Ask for push permission when it makes sense, for example after someone saves a festive item to their wishlist, not on the first screen.
- **From past customers.** Customers who bought from you last year may not have agreed to marketing. Having their number is not the same as having their permission, so do not add them to festive campaigns on that basis. Ask them in person when they next visit, or add a clear opt-in question to your receipt or order confirmation page, and add them only if they say yes.

Ask for the right thing

Consent is for a purpose and a channel. "Order updates on WhatsApp" is not the same as "offers on WhatsApp", and neither covers SMS or email. Keep them separate, and record when and how each one was given. Hey Tomo checks consent before every message, and checks again at the moment of sending, so a customer who says stop on Tuesday is not messaged on Wednesday by a journey that was already running.

Tidy before the rush

- Merge duplicate contacts, so one person does not get the same offer three times.
- Fill in what you know: city, language preference, last festive purchase, birthday month if they shared it.
- Mark anyone you know is under 18. They never get marketing. For a coaching centre or a school uniform shop, reminders can go to a parent or guardian instead.
- Remove people who asked you to stop, and keep them on your suppression list so they are never re-added by an import.
- Test that "STOP", "band karo" and "mat bhejo" all work as opt-outs on every channel you use.

SMS needs its own preparation

If you plan to use SMS, your festive wording must already be registered on DLT under your own Principal Entity, with your own sender header and template IDs. Registration takes time, so do it now, not in Diwali week. Hey Tomo can offer ready-made wording, but it is marked "Needs registration" until you register it yourself and enter the approved template ID and text exactly. AI never writes or rewrites DLT SMS text. Read Register SMS templates on DLT for the steps.

This week

Put a festive opt-in QR code at your counter and add a clear opt-in line to your checkout. Every yes you collect now is a customer you can reach in the busiest weeks.

CHAPTER

03 Countdown and early-access journeys



Two kinds of message do most of the work before a festival: early access for your best customers, and a short countdown for everyone who opted in.

Early access for regulars

Your regulars already like you. Let them see the festive range, the gift boxes or the new collection a few days before everyone else. It costs you nothing and makes them feel known.

Build a segment of customers who opted in and bought at least twice in the last year, or who spent above a level you choose. Send them one message when the range is ready.

> Hi Meera, our Diwali gift hampers are ready, and you get first pick before we share them with everyone on Friday. Want us to keep one aside for you? Reply with the box you like and we will confirm.
>
> Sample · WhatsApp · Kaju Corner, a sweet shop

Figure 3.1 Sample messages. Names and details are made up.

Keep the promise real. If you say "before everyone else", do not send the public announcement the same afternoon.

The countdown

A countdown helps when there is a real deadline: the last day to pre-order, the last day for delivery before the festival, or the last slots for a salon or a photo studio. Without a real deadline, a countdown is just pressure, and customers can tell.

A good countdown journey has two or three steps at most:

1. **The opener**
   Seven to ten days before the deadline. What is on offer, and the date that matters.
2. **The reminder**
   Two or three days before. Only to people who have not already ordered or booked.
3. **The last call**
   On the last day, in the morning. Only if there truly is a cut-off, and only to people who have not acted.

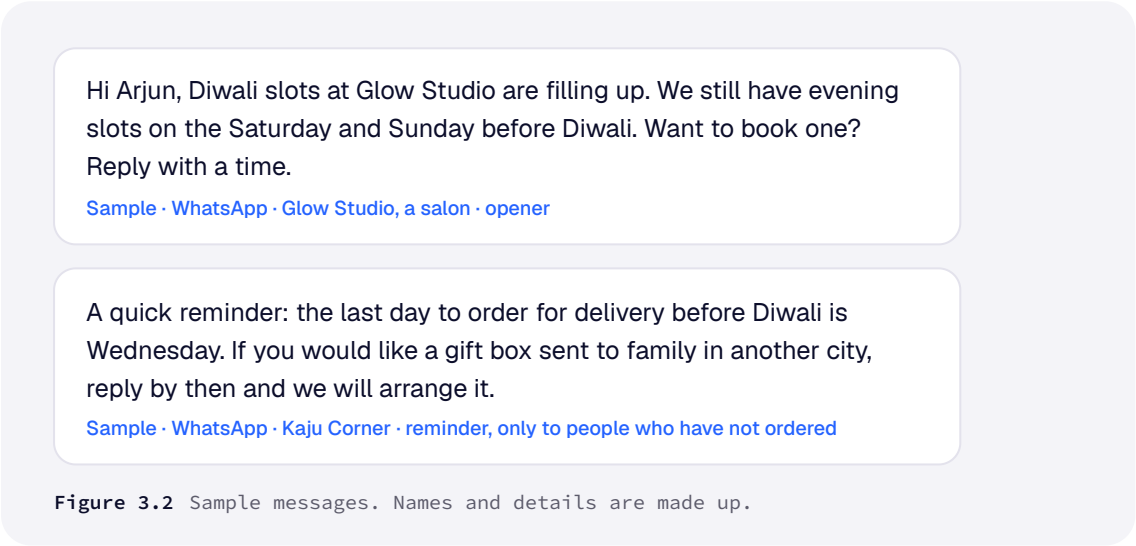


Figure 3.2 Sample messages. Names and details are made up.

Rules that make it work

- **Exit on action.** Anyone who orders, books or replies leaves the journey at once. Nobody should get a "last chance" message after they have already bought.
- **Stop rules.** Decide the maximum number of messages before you start, and stick to it.
- **Daytime only.** Every step waits for your daytime sending hours. A last call at 11 pm is not a favour to anyone.
- **One festival at a time.** If Dussehra and Diwali journeys overlap, a customer may get both. Use a frequency cap (chapter 7) so they do not.

Build the journey once on the canvas, or let Tomo draft it for you to review, then reuse it for Christmas and New Year with new wording.

CHAPTER

04 Back-in-stock and gifting reminders



The season is full of moments where a customer wanted something and could not get it, or needs to buy for someone else and has not started. Both are good reasons to message, because the customer asked or because you are genuinely helping.

Back in stock

When a festive item sells out, offer to tell people when it returns. A "Notify me" button in your app or website, or a reply on WhatsApp, is clear consent for that one message.

> Good news, Priya. The red silk dupatta you asked about is back in stock at Threads by Anu, in the colour you wanted. We have kept one aside until tomorrow evening. Reply YES to confirm.
>
> Sample · WhatsApp · back-in-stock alert

Figure 4.1 Sample messages. Names and details are made up.

- Send it once, as soon as the item is truly available.
- Send it only to people who asked about that item.
- If stock is low, say so honestly, and tell people who missed out that you are sorry rather than sending another sales message.

Gifting reminders

Many festive purchases are gifts: for family, for staff, for clients. A gifting reminder helps when you know something real about the customer: they bought gift boxes last Diwali, they ordered Bhai Dooj gifts last year, or they told you they send hampers to clients.

Hi Rakesh, last Diwali you sent our dry-fruit boxes to your team. Would you like the same this year? We can print your company name on the card and deliver to each address. Reply and we will share the options.

Sample · WhatsApp · Nutty Box, a D2C brand

Figure 4.2 Sample messages. Names and details are made up.

Keep it to one reminder per occasion. If they do not reply, let it go.

Corporate and bulk gifting

Businesses decide earlier than families. If you sell corporate gifts, your first message may need to go a month before Diwali. Use email for longer details and WhatsApp for a short nudge to people who agreed to both. Make sure the person you are writing to is the one who opted in, not just someone whose number was on an invoice.

Wishlists and saved items

If your app or website lets customers save items, a single reminder before the festival is useful: "the items you saved are still available". Do not send it again for every item, and do not send it to someone who already bought them.

This week

Add a "Notify me when back" option to your best festive items. It collects permission for exactly the message you will want to send.

CHAPTER

05 Order and delivery updates during the peak



At peak, the messages customers value most are not offers. They are the ones that answer "where is my order?" before they have to ask. Order and delivery updates are service messages, and they matter more in Diwali week than at any other time.

The updates that earn trust

Moment	What to say
Order placed	What they ordered, the expected date, and how to reach you.
Packed or ready	That it is ready, and the pickup time if they collect.
Out for delivery	That it is on the way today.
Delayed	That it is late, why if you know, and the new expected date.
Delivered	That it arrived, and who to contact if anything is wrong.

Tell people about delays first

Delays happen at peak. Couriers are overloaded, roads are busy, and kitchens run out of capacity. A customer who hears about a delay from you, early and honestly, is far more forgiving than one who finds out by waiting.



Figure 5.1 Sample messages. Names and details are made up.

Keep service and marketing apart

It is tempting to add "and see our new offers" to an order update. Do not. A service message should be a service message. Mixing in promotion can break the platform's rules for that message type, can break the customer's trust, and can turn a service message into marketing that needs consent and quiet hours. Hey Tomo lets only true service messages use the owner's 24/7 option; marketing and reminders keep quiet hours.

Let your AI employee take the questions

Even with good updates, some customers will write in. An AI employee can answer "where is my order", "what time do you close on Diwali" and "do you deliver to Thane" from what you have taught it, and hand anything tricky to a person in the Inbox with the full chat history. Update its knowledge with your festive hours, last order dates and delivery areas before the rush. Read Train your AI employee for how.

This week

Write your festive hours, holiday closures and last delivery dates in one short note, and add it to your AI employee's knowledge.

CHAPTER

06

After the festival: thank-you and win-back



The days after a festival are quiet for most businesses. That makes them a good time for two kinds of message: a thank-you to people who bought, and a gentle invitation to people who did not come this year.

The thank-you

A short thank-you, a few days after delivery, is one of the few messages customers almost always welcome. Make it personal and do not attach a sale to it.

> Thank you for choosing Kaju Corner this Diwali, Meera. We hope the family enjoyed the hamper. If anything was not right, reply and tell us. We read every message.
>
> Sample · WhatsApp · three days after delivery

Figure 6.1 Sample messages. Names and details are made up.

If you want feedback, ask one simple question. A long survey in festive week will mostly go unanswered.

The next reason to come back

Some festive customers are one-time gift buyers. Others could become regulars. A week or two after the thank-you, you can send one useful message to people who opted in to marketing: a winter menu for a café, a New Year booking for a salon, a January batch for a coaching centre, a refill for a D2C brand.

Win-back for those who did not come

Look at customers who bought from you last festive season but not this one. They are the clearest win-back group of the year. Do not chase them during the festival itself, when they are busiest. Wait until the season settles, then send one warm note.

> Hi Kavita, we missed you this Diwali at Threads by Anu. We hope it was a happy one. Our winter collection is in now. If you would like to see it, reply and we will send a few pictures.
>
> Sample · WhatsApp · win-back, two weeks after the festival

Figure 6.2 Sample messages. Names and details are made up.

- One message, perhaps a second a week later only if they have not replied, then stop.
- Give them an easy way to say no thanks. Some have moved, changed taste or found another shop, and that is fine.
- If they say stop, stop for good on that channel and purpose.

The Win-Back e-book has twelve ready journeys you can adapt for after the season.

CHAPTER

07

Do not over-message: frequency caps and quiet hours



In festive weeks, a customer may hear from their bank, their phone company, three clothing brands, two sweet shops and a dozen apps in a single day. Each extra message from you is competing with all of them. Too many, and the customer mutes you, blocks you or reports you, and you lose them for every future season too.

Set a frequency cap

A frequency cap limits how many marketing messages one customer can receive in a period, across all your campaigns and journeys. It is the single most useful protection in the season, because it catches the overlaps you did not plan for: the Dussehra journey and the Diwali preview landing on the same day, or the early-access note and the countdown arriving together.

- Set the cap per customer, across channels, not per campaign.
- Choose a number that would not annoy you if you were the customer. For many small businesses, a couple of marketing messages a week at the peak is plenty.
- Service messages, such as order and delivery updates, should not count towards the cap and should never be blocked by it.

Keep quiet hours

Marketing and reminders keep quiet hours. TRAI's rules restrict commercial calls and SMS to daytime, and the same courtesy makes sense on every channel. Hey Tomo holds marketing and reminder messages that fall inside quiet hours until the next allowed time, rather than sending them at night. Only service messages, such as an order update the customer is waiting for, may use the owner's 24/7 option.

During festivals, people stay up late and you may be tempted to send a midnight offer. Do not. A message at midnight on Diwali night feels intrusive, not festive.

One greeting, not five

Festival greetings are kind, but a greeting on every festival from Navratri to Pongal starts to feel like spam. Pick the one or two that matter most to each customer, based on what you know about them, and make those personal.

Watch the warning signs

- Opt-outs rising after a send. Look at what went out and to whom.
- Replies like "who is this" or "why are you messaging me". Someone on your list did not really opt in.
- Blocks or reports on WhatsApp. The platform watches these, and too many can limit your number.
- Your own staff saying customers complained at the counter.

If you see any of these, pause marketing, look at the list and the wording, and fix the cause before sending again. Read Consent, opt-outs and quiet hours for the details.

CHAPTER

08

Measure what worked with a holdout



In the festive season, sales go up whether you send messages or not. That makes it easy to fool yourself. If you sent a Diwali campaign and sales rose, was it the campaign, or was it Diwali?

What a holdout is

A holdout group is a small, random share of the customers who would have received a message, who do not receive it. You then compare what the two groups did. If the people who got your message bought more than the similar people who did not, the difference is the lift: the part you can fairly credit to the message.

How to set one up

1. **Pick the goal first**
   An order, a booking, a visit or a reply, within a set number of days.
2. **Hold back a small random group**
   Large enough to compare, small enough that you are not giving up much. The holdout must be chosen at random, not "the people I did not have time to message".
3. **Send to everyone else as planned**
   Do not change anything else for one group and not the other.
4. **Compare after the window closes**
   Look at the goal rate in both groups. In Hey Tomo, Analyze shows this as "did it work" lift for a journey or campaign that has a holdout.

Read the result honestly

- **If the lift is clear,** keep the journey for next year and note what you sent and when.

- **If there is no lift,** the customers would have bought anyway. That is useful to know. You can send less next year and spend your effort elsewhere.
- **If the message group did worse,** something put people off. Look at timing, wording and frequency.
- **If the groups are small,** the difference may be chance. Treat it as a hint, not a verdict.

Keep a season diary

Write down, for each festival: what you sent, to which segment, on which days, and what the holdout showed. Add what went wrong in operations: stock that ran out, deliveries that slipped. Next year, open the diary before you plan. It is worth more than any template.

Before the season starts

Choose one journey, perhaps your Diwali countdown, and run it with a holdout this year. One honest result is better than ten guesses.



Put it to work

Sign up, collect festive opt-ins now, and set your quiet hours and frequency cap. Build your countdown journey on the canvas, or let Tomo draft it for you to review, and run it with a holdout. Start free. Related guides: Build your first journey, Consent, opt-outs and quiet hours and the journey templates.

Hey Tomo helps Indian small businesses bring customers back on WhatsApp, SMS, email, push and in-app, with AI employees that answer from your own knowledge. Let Tomo do it for you, or build it yourself.

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