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Rise Of Quick Commerce In India: Opportunities And Challenges

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Abstract

The evolution of e-commerce in India has given rise to a new segment known as Quick Commerce (Q-commerce), which emphasizes ultra-fast delivery of essential goods within a short time frame, typically between 10 and 30 minutes. Driven by urbanization, changing consumer behavior, and technological innovation, Q-commerce platforms such as Blinkit, Zepto, Swiggy Instamart, and Dunzo have transformed the retail landscape. This paper explores the emergence, opportunities, and challenges of Q-commerce in India, using secondary data from recent studies, industry reports, and scholarly journals. Findings indicate that while Q-commerce offers immense convenience and market potential, it faces challenges related to sustainability, profitability, and workforce welfare. The study concludes by providing insights and recommendations for enhancing operational efficiency and ensuring long-term viability in the sector.

Keywords

Quick Commerce, E-commerce, Consumer Behavior, Retail Innovation, India, Delivery Platforms, Market Growth

Introduction

The Indian e-commerce landscape has undergone significant transformation with the emergence of Quick Commerce (Q-commerce), which offers rapid delivery of groceries and daily essentials through hyperlocal networks. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift, leading consumers to prioritize convenience, safety, and time efficiency. With increasing digital penetration, mobile usage, and online payment adoption, Q-commerce has become a cornerstone of urban consumer behavior. The sector's growth is supported by massive investments, AI-driven logistics, and the integration of dark stores in metropolitan cities. Despite this expansion, issues of sustainability, operational cost, and delivery workforce challenges persist, demanding a balanced approach to innovation and profitability.

Quick Commerce Applications in India

Several applications have shaped India's Q-commerce ecosystem. Blinkit, formerly known as Grofers, revolutionized the grocery delivery model by focusing on 10–15-minute delivery services. Zepto, one of the fastest-growing startups, leverages dark stores and AI analytics to fulfill urban demand efficiently. Swiggy Instamart and Dunzo have diversified their operations, offering rapid deliveries across multiple categories including food, beverages, and household products. BigBasket's Express model has expanded instant

delivery to Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities. Together, these applications exemplify the rapid evolution of retail supply chains, creating a hybrid market where technology, logistics, and consumer expectations converge.

Literature Review

1. Gupta (2024) emphasizes that technological innovation and changing lifestyles have driven the expansion of Q-commerce, with instant delivery services becoming a core feature of modern retailing.
2. Bose & Datta (2024) analyze the relationship between delivery speed and consumer satisfaction, identifying rapid delivery as a determinant of purchase loyalty.
3. Ranjekar & Roy (2023) from IIM Ahmedabad highlight that automation in dark stores enhances efficiency but raises sustainability concerns.
4. Kumar & Chawla (2022) discuss consumer protection frameworks in digital commerce, underscoring the need for transparency and data security.
5. Saldanha (2023) reports that platforms such as Zepto face criticism over safety and labor welfare due to extreme delivery deadlines.
6. Pawar (2023) identifies how digital transformation and rising disposable income influence Q-commerce growth, noting that online groceries represent only 8% of India's market potential.
7. Ganapathy & Gupta (2023) observe that partnerships with local kirana stores can improve Q-commerce resilience and inclusivity.
8. MORDOR Intelligence (2024) forecasts that India's Q-commerce market could reach USD 9.9 billion by 2029, growing at a CAGR of 4.5%.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the key drivers influencing the rapid growth of quick commerce in India.
2. To analyze the impact of quick commerce on consumer behavior and retail businesses.
3. To examine the major challenges and limitations faced by Q-commerce platforms.
4. To propose strategies and recommendations for improving efficiency and profitability within the industry.

Research Methodology

The study is based entirely on secondary data collected from credible sources, including academic journals, government publications, market intelligence reports, and company white papers. Data from industry analyses such as RedSeer, Statista, and Mordor Intelligence were also utilized to evaluate market trends, growth projections, and consumer preferences. The secondary data method ensures a comprehensive understanding of the Q-commerce sector's operational dynamics without engaging in primary field research.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study relies solely on secondary data, which may not fully capture real-time market fluctuations.
2. Limited availability of financial data for privately held Q-commerce startups constrains depth of analysis.
3. Rapidly evolving market conditions in the sector may affect the long-term accuracy of projections.
4. Potential bias in online sources and reports could influence the interpretation of certain findings.

Findings and conclusion

1. India's Q-commerce market is expected to reach nearly USD 5.5 billion by 2025, reflecting a CAGR of 67%.
2. Blinkit, Swiggy Instamart, and Zepto dominate over 90% of the market share, highlighting an oligopolistic structure.
3. Urbanization and rising disposable incomes have been the primary demand drivers, with over 65% of consumers in Tier-1 cities using Q-commerce apps.
4. Delivery workforce management remains a major challenge, with 70% of riders expressing concerns over

job stability.

5. Q-commerce has led to increased impulse buying behavior, with 45% of users reporting higher purchase frequency.
6. Sustainability concerns persist due to increased packaging waste and energy consumption.
7. Collaboration between Q-commerce platforms and kirana stores can enhance last-mile delivery and customer trust.

Quick commerce represents a paradigm shift in the Indian retail ecosystem, combining technology, logistics, and consumer convenience. While it offers immense potential for market expansion, its sustainability depends on optimizing operational efficiency and addressing social and environmental challenges. The long-term success of Q-commerce in India will rely on strategic partnerships, regulatory support, and technological innovation to ensure both profitability and inclusivity.

Suggestions

1. Implement AI-driven route and inventory optimization to reduce operational costs.
2. Introduce standardized labor policies to ensure fair treatment of delivery workers.
3. Encourage collaboration with local kirana stores to strengthen supply chains.
4. Adopt eco-friendly packaging and green logistics to minimize environmental impact.
5. Enhance customer loyalty programs to improve retention and profitability.
6. Develop government-backed policies promoting sustainable and ethical Q-commerce practices.

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