

## **Q-COMMERCE: THE EVOLUTION OF SHOPPING FROM IN-STORE PURCHASES TO INSTANT HOME DELIVERY"**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Gone are the days when people had to plan for their weekly and monthly purchase of groceries and other necessities and visit markets, be it for groceries, vegetables, milk or medicine. With the steady growth in serving customers demands and competition, business started offering various add-on services. The growth of malls people started visiting regularly as they could buy all that they need under single roof with good ambience and that too at discounted prices. With the development of e-commerce and due to the spread of internet and severe competition, new business had come up with online shopping with home delivery facility where the need to visit shops/malls and carrying back goods was reduced. Cut throat competition resulted in companies offering delivery of goods in record time, starting within a day resulting to within 10 minutes i.e. e-commerce has led to Q-commerce (Quick Commerce). With the growth of new online start-ups, customers are being pampered by various facilities. People no longer have to plan their purchases in advance. At any given time one can order any item and get it delivered in a matter of minutes. This paper tries to find out the journey of shopping experience from physical shopping to instant home delivery i.e. Q-commerce and also the impact on the people who work in this industry.

**Keywords:** Q-Commerce, E-Commerce, Online business

Not long time ago people had to visit the markets for buying their requirements. They had to visit various shops for different goods and also bargain for better rates. Now gone are the days when people had to plan for their weekly and monthly purchase of groceries and other requirement and visit markets, be it for groceries, vegetables, milk or medicine. With the steady growth in serving customers demands and competition, business started offering various add-on services. The growth of malls people started visiting regularly as they could buy all that they need under single roof with good ambience and that too at discounted prices. With the development of e-commerce due to the spread of internet and severe competition, new business came up with online shopping offering home delivery facility where the need to visit shops/malls and carrying back goods was reduced. Cut throat competition resulted in companies offering delivery of goods in record time, starting within a day resulting to within 20 minutes i.e. e-commerce has led to Q-commerce (Quick Commerce). With the growth of new online start-ups, customers/shoppers are getting pampered. They no longer have to plan their purchases in advance. At any given time one can order any item and get it delivered in a record time or instant delivery. Q-Commerce originally started with food delivery and it still represents the largest chunk of the business. It slowly expanded to other categories particularly for grocery delivery, gifts, medicines and apparel, etc. The evolution of quick commerce started in 2011 with companies like Postmates in US. It started gaining scale and traction around 2017 as companies like Delivery Hero(Germany) and Meituan (China)

expanded into the area. Blinkit, Swiggy Instamart, Reliance-backed Dunzo and Zepto are among the platforms leading the 10-20-minute delivery category. With micro warehouses and dark neighbourhood stores, and despite steep cash burn, the trend is accelerating among consumers.

With the opening of the Indian economy in the 90s India has come a long way becoming an import part of the global economy. The IT revolution pushed India at world stage with India becoming a major hub for western countries for IT and ITES businesses. With the exponential growth in the internet and development of new technologies had an impact on businesses. With the steady increase in the FDI and availability of latest technology created a lot of job opportunities for the young Indians especially in the IT and ITES sector, thereby pushing for growth in other sectors and leading to higher disposable income. The stages in the journey of shopping can be traced as follows:

1. **Traditional shopping** : Not long time ago people used to have limited budgets and had to plan for the monthly purchases. They were dependent on the local grocery store for their requirement or visited central shopping places to get better deals. They had to visit multiple shops to buy various things i.e for buying clothes, for buying shoes, medicines or groceries. It required a lot of time and effort on the part of shoppers during their period.
2. **Departmental and specialised stores**: With the opening of the Indian economy there was an influx of FDI from developed countries. Along with foreign investment, it also led to the availability of technology leading to the growth of Indian companies. This resulted in the creation of jobs and higher disposable income leading to the growth of specialised stores. Shoppers could get good quality or branded goods at the departmental and specialised stores.
3. **Malls and Fast Food Outlets**: Further with the development in the IT and ITES sector many companies from the developed countries outsourced their day-to-day routine operations to Indian companies. This led to their concentration on their core businesses and also increased their profits as they could get the routine work done at much lesser costs as compared to their own countries. India, with the advantage of English speaking population, was a favoured destination. The BPOs created job opportunities to growing young population. This led to increase in the disposable income in the hands of the young people who needed to spend money buy things which were available in western countries.

With the growth of cable TV many young people wanted to imitate the western life style leading to the growth of high end Malls. Many fast food giants also started their operations in India.

With the opening of high-end malls, shoppers enjoyed a different shopping experience. Instead of shopping in open markets or visiting multiple stores, people were provided airconditioned spaces where they could leisurely buy everything under a single roof. Vast discounts are offered to attract a steady stream of customers.

4. **Shopping malls with Home delivery facility**: The opening of multiple shopping malls led to severe competition. Malls provided higher discount's as well as add-on

services like free home delivery. Shoppers had to only buy the goods and make payment. The goods were delivered to the customers home within prescribed time at the most by next day.

5. **E-Commerce:** With the exponential growth in the internet, many new companies offered online goods. Goods were made available at heavy discounts as there was saving on overhead costs. There was no need of maintaining physical shops and employees. Moreover, there was no need to maintain huge stocks. Goods could be offered to the world at large and can be ordered online without the constraints of time or place. Shoppers could now buy anything from anywhere that was available online and the goods were delivered free of cost in the prescribed time depending on the buyers distance. A huge role is played by the courier's services providers. Now there was no need to physically visit saving time and travel. The goods could be returned back and money refunded if the customer was not satisfied. The government initiative for digital payments has also led to the increase in online shopping.

The Covid 19 lockdown also forced many people to go for online shopping as most of the physical business outlets were closed.

6. **Q-Commerce:** Since the early 2020, many restrictions got imposed due to covid-19. This pandemic gave a major boost to Q-Commerce as it made retailers to remain operational and customers also expected quick home deliveries. This resulted in a major shift of the consumer behaviour towards quick deliveries, and leading to Q-Commerce. With the Cut throat competition and growth in the online shopping, it has resulted in companies offering delivery of goods in record time with some offering in as short as within 10 minutes i.e. e-commerce has led to Q-commerce (Quick Commerce). With the growth of new online start-ups, customers/shoppers are getting pampered like never before. They no longer have to plan their purchases in advance. At any given time one can order any item and get it delivered immediately.

As it is well said that every coin has its two sides, here, although the customers are benefitted with the availability of Q-Commerce, there is also a negative side. The people who work in these service delivery companies have to undergo tremendous physical and mental stress while providing this quick services. There is concern about the delivery employees like:

1. **Road safety of delivery staff:** As more and more companies are trying to please customers with instant delivery the delivery staff are forced to drive fast. This leads to traffic violations and also can result in accidents. As quick commerce pushes time barrier, workers fight the clock, bend rules, and take on risks.
2. **Penalties:** Some companies have incentive based payment structure. If a delivery person delivers as per the target, he gets an additional amount as incentive, but at the same time if he is delayed due to whatever reason, his payment is deducted accordingly.
3. **No holidays:** Many a times the delivery staff is encouraged with incentives to work on all week days with no holidays. This tends to have an adverse effect on their health.

4. **Limited safety cover:** Many a times the delivery work is outsourced to another company thereby there is no direct safety cover from the parent company in case of any untoward happens to the delivery staff.

## CONCLUSION

With keen competition to satisfy the limited consumers, companies are going all out to please them and provide the best and quickest service. This is bound to stay in the near future. The government should develop some norms for these service providers so that everyone involved in this business is benefitted.

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