The Impact Of India's Growing Quick Commerce Industry On Consumers And Gig Workers

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ABSTRACT

This research examines India's growing quick commerce (q-commerce) industry in recent years and its projected growth in the coming decade. The paper addresses two primary research questions: (1) How has q-commerce shaped consumer behavior—particularly in terms of impulse buying and loyalty program engagement—among urban Indian consumers? and (2) What are the employment opportunities and vulnerabilities associated with gig work in the q-commerce sector? The study outlines the operational model of q-commerce, the firms that lead the industry, the integral supply chain, and the consumer-facing strategies—including loyalty programs, coupons, and promotional discounts—that have psychologically appealed to consumers and stimulated demand.

The study incorporates insights from a consumer survey, conducted between January and March 2025 via Google Forms and distributed through WhatsApp groups to respondents in the Bangalore metropolitan area, that received 128 responses spanning diverse age groups and employment statuses. Demographic patterns and behavioral trends are analyzed across subgroups, with chi-square tests of association and Wilson 95% confidence intervals reported to contextualize key findings. In addition to consumer habits, the paper presents a structured literature review of gig employment in the sector, highlighting both the opportunities and vulnerabilities among these workers. Impulse buying and overconsumption patterns that this sector has given rise to have also been examined. While it brings forth increased consumer satisfaction and generates significant employment, q-commerce also produces several consequences and instabilities for gig workers. The final section discusses the future trajectory of the industry, examining challenges it must overcome to achieve long-term sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Quick commerce, also known as q-commerce, is a rapidly growing segment of e-commerce focused on delivering goods within a 10–30 minute window. Unlike traditional retail, q-commerce emphasizes speed and convenience, reshaping consumer expectations with its ability to instantly gratify needs. Its rise in India began during the COVID-19 pandemic, when lockdowns necessitated rapid delivery solutions for firms to maintain business. Initially centered on food delivery, the model has since expanded to include groceries, electronics, personal care items, and apparel. India, as one of the fastest-growing digital

markets, saw a rapid surge in quick commerce adoption by 2023, with 40–50% of all online grocery orders placed through q-commerce platforms by 2024. Globally, convenience and efficiency have become top consumer priorities, as highlighted in pre-pandemic reports by PwC—trends that have further accelerated post-pandemic. However, while the industry is expected to grow substantially in revenue and geographic reach within India, concerns regarding its long-term sustainability persist.

Q-commerce's operational model heavily depends on gig workers—informal, unskilled laborers who are paid per task and lack standard employment protections. While this reduces labor costs and facilitates rapid scaling, it raises serious questions about worker welfare and job security. These employment dynamics, along with the model's environmental and economic implications, are explored in the latter sections of this paper. This research aims to analyze the consequences—both positive and negative—of India's quick commerce boom, assessing whether it represents a sustainable evolution in the retail industry or a temporary response to shifting consumer habits and technological opportunities.

This paper addresses the following two primary research questions:

- RQ1: How has q-commerce shaped consumer behavior—particularly impulse buying and loyalty program engagement—among urban Indian consumers?
- RQ2: What employment opportunities and vulnerabilities does gig work in the q-commerce sector present for Indian workers?

Paper Roadmap

Section 0 reviews the existing literature on q-commerce and the gig economy. Section 1 provides an overview of the Indian q-commerce industry, covering market competition, supply chain operations, and marketing strategies. Section 2 presents the methodology, sample characteristics, and results of an original consumer survey conducted in Bangalore. Section 3 offers a structured literature review of gig employment dynamics in the sector. Section 4 synthesizes the evidence to discuss the future sustainability of q-commerce. A conclusion, a limitations discussion, and references follow.

SECTION 0: LITERATURE REVIEW

The quick commerce industry has grown rapidly in recent years, driven by consumers' increasing demand for convenience and speed, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic. A substantial body of literature exists on this topic. For instance, Ranjekar and Roy (2023) have analyzed its emergence from e-commerce, highlighting the centrality of dark stores—small, strategically positioned fulfillment warehouses—in the supply chain, infrastructure requirements, and future challenges. Quick commerce had emerged as a global phenomenon, reshaping logistics in urban cities like Paris (Rai et al., 2023), with supply chains comprising diverse facility types and transport facilities using electrical bikes and mopeds. Moreover, consumer convenience is the central element of quick commerce operators' service (Rau et al., 2023) and is responsible for disrupting traditional online grocery retailing.

Extensive research has examined the emergence of quick commerce, exploring historical trends (Nougarahiya et al., 2021) and forecasting future developments (Stojanov, 2022). Key drivers include

shifting consumer preferences, increased smartphone penetration, urbanization, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Sarvanan (2024) highlights major industry challenges, such as profitability, logistics inefficiencies, and sustainability, while also emphasizing the role of technology in improving operational efficiency and demand. The evolution of rapid delivery—typically within 10 to 30 minutes—has redefined retail, though studies reveal minor variations across countries in supply chain practices and challenges (Arora, 2024). Despite its appeal, quick commerce raises sustainability concerns due to rising emissions, traffic congestion, and packaging waste (Haneefa & Singh, 2025).

Furthermore, research indicates that supply chain integration—through information sharing, joint planning, and logistics cooperation—enhances resilience (Qi et al., 2022). Quick commerce operates through a unique and efficient model, employing dark stores in densely populated urban locations to enable rapid delivery, though not without disruptions like congestion and noise pollution (Schorung, 2023). Several studies focus on Western cities such as Paris, London, and New York (Rai et al., 2023), leaving a gap in understanding the dynamics of fast-growing markets like India. This paper addresses that gap by examining the socio-economic effects of quick commerce in India, including both job creation and displacement. Existing literature explores the impact of convenience and speed on consumer behavior, highlighting increased impulsiveness, satisfaction, and brand loyalty (Goswami & Kumari, 2024). In Indonesia, factors like discounts, product quality, and user interface have enhanced customer experience (Felix & Rembulan, 2023). Chu et al. (2010) further show that online shoppers exhibit strong brand loyalty and are less price sensitive, suggesting that quick commerce reinforces these behavioral trends.

Gig workers represent a core component of the quick commerce industry, with the recent rise of the gig economy creating substantial employment opportunities in India (Mehta, 2020). This shift is reshaping the informal economy, though barriers such as high competition, late-night deliveries, and poor pay structures remain prominent in food delivery platforms (Behl et al., 2022). Sinha and Pandit (2023) assess the economic sustainability of gig work in Kolkata, highlighting the impact of long hours and unstable incomes. These challenges reflect a rising concern about the long-term viability of gig work despite its growing role in employment generation in India. As the quick commerce industry expands, emerging technologies—particularly artificial intelligence—are expected to play a significant role in shaping its sustainability and growth. Post the Covid-19 pandemic, digital transformation has accelerated, with firms adopting new tools to remain competitive. Afroz et al. (2023) examines how artificial intelligence enhances e-commerce by identifying consumer preferences and patterns, improving user experience, streamlining operations, and reducing fraud.

Unlike previous studies that examine isolated aspects, such as consumer psychology, gig workers, or supply chain logistics, this research adopts an integrated approach by analyzing both consumer and worker perspectives. It explores how consumer preferences may influence employment trends within the industry—an angle that has been underexplored in existing literature. Having conducted a consumer survey, the study also assesses public perceptions on the quick commerce industry. Moreover, a discussion section, drawing on AI literature, examines the potential integration of artificial intelligence into delivery platforms and forecasts the future of this industry.

SECTION 1: STATE OF THE QUICK COMMERCE INDUSTRY IN INDIA

1.1 - Background: Competition and Business Operations

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, several firms, particularly in the food and beverage industry, began pivoting to e-commerce to maintain consumer access and supply chain resilience (Memon et al., 2021; Reardon et al., 2021). Key factors, including convenience, rapid urbanization, and evolving consumer lifestyles, have driven firms to optimize delivery speeds and reconfigure traditional e-commerce supply chains (Ranjekar & Roy, 2023). Key players include established firms' subsidiaries like Swiggy Instamart, Zomato's Blinkit, Flipkart Minutes, and Tata's BigBasket Now, alongside fast-growing startups such as Zepto, which currently leads in revenue and growth among newer players.

According to a JP Morgan report (2024), Swiggy Instamart recorded the fastest median delivery time—8 minutes across its top four Indian cities—compared to its promised 6 minutes. Zepto followed with a median time of 9 minutes (vs. a 5-minute promise), while Blinkit delivered in 11 minutes (vs. an 8-minute promise). Since its launch in August 2020, Swiggy Instamart has significantly improved from its original 30–45 minute delivery window, reflecting the industry's rapid growth and technological advancement in recent years. The report highlighted Instamart's variance of 2 minutes between promised and actual delivery times, outperforming Zepto and Blinkit, which showed variances of 4 and 3 minutes, respectively. BB Now and Flipkart Minutes aligned with their promised delivery times of 11 and 15 minutes, respectively. In early 2024, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) requested delivery data from these firms to verify their 10-minute delivery claims. Allowing a 4-minute buffer, the CCPA required firms exceeding this threshold to revise their marketing claims. As most companies met the 14-minute benchmark—excluding Flipkart Minutes—the industry has largely maintained its efficiency standards despite concerns from regulatory authorities. With projected revenues of $5.38 billion in 2025 (Statista), quick commerce in India is expected to rapidly expand.

Rising competition in India's quick commerce sector is accelerating delivery efficiency as companies are increasingly leveraging advanced technologies in the face of competition. A 2025 Citi report estimated that Blinkit holds the largest market share at 41%, followed by Swiggy Instamart at 23%. While Zepto's market share was not explicitly stated, industry analysts suggest it may be comparable to or even exceed Swiggy's, based on data traffic trends. Zepto CEO Aadit Palicha reported a Gross Order Value (GOV) of ₹24,500 crore, closely aligning with Blinkit's ₹24,528 crore and significantly surpassing Instamart's ₹13,528 crore. A separate analysis by Motilal Oswal places Blinkit's market share at 46%, with Zepto and Instamart at 29% and 25%, respectively. These figures reflect a highly competitive and rapidly evolving industry landscape. Note that market share estimates vary across sources; figures from Citi (2025) and Motilal Oswal differ and are discussed accordingly.

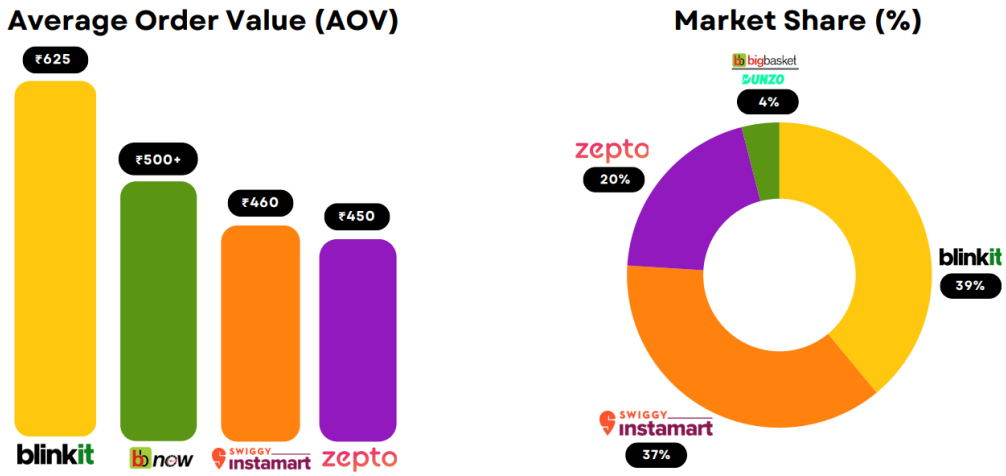

Fig. 1.11—AOV and Market Share of Top-Performing Quick Commerce Firms (Chryseum)

The disparity in unit economics and cash burn rates between Swiggy Instamart and Zomato's Blinkit highlights the financial challenges faced within the quick-commerce industry. None of the three leading players—Instamart, Blinkit, or Zepto—have achieved profitability to date. For sustainable growth, firms must raise their Average Order Value (AOV), accelerate customer acquisition, and reduce supply chain costs by improving logistical efficiencies. Despite offering similar sub-10-minute delivery windows, these companies operate under distinct business models shaped by their origins and customer segments. Blinkit, for instance, offers value-added services like instant printing and operates approximately 1,229 dark stores, indicating strong vertical integration (JP Morgan, 2024). Zepto, with 1,447 dark stores, was purpose-built for 10-minute delivery, unlike Swiggy Instamart and Blinkit, which originated from food delivery platforms. Swiggy Instamart benefits from its parent company's existing infrastructure and aims to scale up to 1,000 dark stores by Q4 FY25, while Blinkit targets 2,000 stores by the same period. Additionally, Zepto and Instamart offer loyalty programs—Zepto Pass and Swiggy One—offering discounts and several member benefits, whereas Blinkit does not offer a similar subscription-based incentive.

Projections & Growth

India's quick commerce sector is projected to grow at an annual rate of 75–100%, outpacing traditional retail (Bernstein, 2024). The top 40–50 cities in the country are expected to contribute a significant share of the $250 billion grocery market, much of which quick commerce can potentially capture. In FY2024, quick commerce accounted for nearly half of all e-commerce grocery transactions (Bernstein Report, Economic Times), underscoring its expanding presence. According to a joint report by ANAROCK and ETRetail, India's e-commerce market was valued at $125 billion (₹10.82 lakh crore) in FY2024 and is projected to reach $345 billion by FY2030 and $550 billion by FY2035, reflecting a 15% CAGR. Meanwhile, Chryseum (2024) reported that while overall e-commerce grew 14% year-on-year (YoY) in FY2023–24, quick commerce grew by 73%. Despite its rapid growth, the quick commerce sector's market penetration currently stands at just 7%, with a total addressable market of $45 billion. Compared to the industry's valuation of $3.3 billion as of FY2024, this indicates substantial growth potential. Traditional

players like Amazon saw slower revenue growth (14.4% in FY2023), suggesting quick commerce's disruptive role in both the e-commerce and traditional retail markets. Reports of Amazon's interest in acquiring Swiggy's Instamart (Economic Times, 2024) further highlight the sector's rising relevance.

Quick Commerce Penetration – Indian Retail Market		
Year	E-commerce	Total retail
2018	0.14 percent	0.003 percent
2023	4.8 percent	0.3 percent
2028 (*Projected*)	17-30 percent	2-3 percent

Source: Grant Thornton Bharat, Economic Times

Fig. 1.12—Quick Commerce and E-commerce's Rising Penetration in E-commerce and Retail Markets (Grant Thornton Bharat, Economic Times)

1.2 - Supply Chain Operations

The rise of 10-minute deliveries in India has transformed consumer shopping habits, prompting important questions about how quick commerce firms fulfill their promises. Central to their operations is the use of dark stores—small, strategically located warehouses designed exclusively for online order fulfillment. As per a JP Morgan report, Blinkit and Zepto currently operate approximately 1,229 and 1,447 dark stores, respectively, while Swiggy Instamart aims to reach 1,000 by Q4 FY2025. During Q4 FY2024–25 alone, Instamart and Blinkit reportedly added 250–300 stores each, signaling aggressive expansion. Blinkit expanded its geographic footprint from 85 to 153 cities between December 2024 and March 2025, while Instamart grew from 75 to 100 cities in the same period—highlighting a push into Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets, where meeting 10-minute delivery timelines may pose additional challenges. In contrast, Zepto has taken a more measured approach, adding 105 new stores and focusing on deepening its presence in existing urban markets. Although its pace of expansion has slowed, Zepto's rising store vintage—referring to the operational maturity of its dark stores—indicates stronger unit economics and potential for long-term sustainability.

Dark stores stock the full inventory visible to customers through quick commerce apps. These stores receive daily shipments from warehouses, especially of high-demand, perishable items, ensuring product availability and freshness. The strategic location of dark stores is critical to operational efficiency. According to Kaivalya Vohra, co-founder and CTO of Zepto, the company relies on historical data—including surveys and analytics—to determine optimal store placement. This data-driven approach enables accurate order volume forecasting, improving both inventory management and customer satisfaction. The internal layout of dark stores also plays a pivotal role. Frequently ordered Stock Keeping Units (SKUs) are positioned near checkout zones to minimize retrieval times. The store is organized into

sections and racks by category, and a team of "pickers"—tasked with locating, picking, and packing items—is directed to specific product locations via the system. According to Kabeer Biswas, CEO and co-founder of Dunzo, the picking process takes only 2–3 minutes, leaving 7–8 minutes to assign a delivery partner and complete the final leg to the customer's doorstep, maximizing the efficiency of the process.

Once a customer places an order, a backend system immediately processes it, and AI algorithms assess real-time inventory to route the request to the nearest Micro-Fulfillment Center (MFC) or dark store. Once routed, AI-optimized paths guide pickers through the store layout to collect items quickly. Barcode scanning ensures product accuracy, and most picking and packing tasks are completed within 3–4 minutes. Machine learning (ML) tools further estimate delivery times by factoring in driver availability, warehouse workload, distance, and even weather conditions—generating minute-level accuracy, as noted by Swiggy CTO Dale Vaz.

Drivers, often pre-assigned or stationed nearby, receive the package through a near-instant, contactless handover that typically takes less than a minute. The final leg—delivery—is executed via electric bikes or scooters, with navigation systems using live traffic data to identify the fastest route. Since each dark store serves a small delivery radius based on population density and demand, the delivery time takes approximately 5 minutes. Together, this highly synchronized, tech-driven system—from inventory management and routing to delivery execution—ensures maximum logistical efficiency and accuracy.

In the demand forecasting process, machine learning (ML) models are used to predict stock requirements based on historical sales trends, seasonal variations, location-specific data, shelf life, and turnover rates. Once forecasts are generated, they are adjusted for existing stock levels and expiry timelines, and a purchase order is produced to procure the required SKUs. These models also account for safety buffers to compensate for demand fluctuations or damaged goods.

Typically, products are first delivered from vendors to central warehouses and then distributed to individual dark stores across the city. However, for perishable items like milk, direct delivery to dark stores is often preferred to maximize shelf life. Upon arrival, products undergo multiple quality checks, both pre- and post-delivery. Throughout this process, an Inventory Management System (IMS) keeps real-time stock data updated, ensuring alignment between physical inventory and digital listings. Several infrastructural components are critical to scaling operations in this space (Ranjekar & Roy, 2023). These include an effective Order Management System (OMS), optimized warehouse layouts for seamless navigation, modern racking systems to reduce product damage, and sustainable yet durable packaging solutions. Furthermore, delivery partner safety protocols must be embedded in operational planning. As technology continues to evolve, investments in AI and automation are expected to grow, driving improvements in logistical efficiency and enhancing the overall customer experience.

Effectively managing stock levels is essential to minimizing delays, controlling costs, and preventing wastage—core factors in maintaining the long-term sustainability of the quick commerce business model. Equally important is ensuring the consistent availability of delivery partners, especially during peak hours, to meet fluctuating demand efficiently. In February 2025, Swiggy announced an investment of up to INR 1,000 crore (USD 115.47 million) in its supply chain subsidiary. This strategic move reflects a

growing industry-wide emphasis on enhancing supply chain efficiency as a means to uphold the 10-minute delivery promise. The hyperlocal nature of the quick commerce model—with rapid product turnover and frequent daily restocking of perishables like milk, fruits, and vegetables—makes logistics a critical area for innovation. As companies continue to ramp up investments in artificial intelligence and automation, the potential to further streamline operations becomes increasingly viable. However, these advancements also raise questions about sustainability, particularly regarding their broader implications for both consumers and workers. While automation could enhance accuracy and reduce delivery times, it may also lead to a reduced need for pickers and delivery personnel if each worker's productivity is significantly enhanced by technology. Balancing technological efficiency with ethical labor practices and environmental sustainability will likely be a key challenge for the industry moving forward.

Figure 4: Process flow of grocery products ordered online using the instant delivery app

Fig. 1.21—Process Map of Order Delivery (Ranjekar & Roy, 2023)

1.3 - Economic Theory & Marketing Strategies

As India's quick commerce industry continues its rapid expansion, firms are increasingly employing aggressive marketing strategies—including promotions, loyalty programs, coupons, and discounts—to boost consumer demand and engagement. A key focus has been on increasing advertising spend, driven by the sector's ability to offer real-time measurement of campaign effectiveness. Kushal Bhatnagar, Associate Partner at Redseer Strategy Consultants, notes that this immediate feedback enables brands to achieve a better return on ad spend on quick commerce platforms compared to other media. With the projected surge in consumers, the sector presents significant opportunities—from product sampling and co-branded merchandise to expanding into newer categories like sustainable goods, wellness products, beauty, and home decor. Existing monthly transacting users (MTUs) are expected to increase spending by 20% in FY25.

Swiggy Instamart's marketing efforts include banners, sponsored listings, and real-time push notifications, and while its specific ad spend was not disclosed, Swiggy's overall promotional budget stood at INR 1,850 crore in 2024. Zepto allocated INR 303 crore to advertising in FY24 (up from INR 215.82 crore in FY23), while Blinkit spent INR 191 crore. On the other side, collectively, quick commerce platforms generated an estimated INR 3,000–3,500 crore in annual recurring revenue (ARR) from advertising, with

Blinkit at 45% market share, followed by Zepto (35%) and Instamart (20%), according to Elara Securities. In contrast, Amazon India's FY24 ad revenue stood at INR 6,700 crore—only twice the ARR of quick commerce, despite the latter accounting for just 8% of the country's online shoppers. Notably, Blinkit's ad revenue surged 220% year-on-year in Q3 FY24, outpacing its GOV growth of 103%, highlighting the increasing significance of targeted advertising in this evolving sector. With advertisement margins ranging between 90% and 95%, on-platform advertising has emerged as a highly profitable revenue stream.

Quick commerce firms use promotions and loyalty programs to tap into consumer behavior, particularly through the substitution effect, which refers to how consumers shift consumption when the relative prices of goods change. According to the Law of Demand in economics, if the price of a good falls relative to its substitutes, its demand increases. In the context of quick commerce, when platforms offer discounts, free delivery, or loyalty benefits, the effective price of ordering through apps becomes lower than that of traditional retail (in both monetary cost and time). Even without reducing list prices, these benefits lower the perceived cost, prompting consumers to substitute away from more time-consuming alternatives like visiting physical stores. The convenience of 10-minute deliveries, when paired with such incentives, makes app-based shopping more appealing, reinforcing this substitution. Examples include discounts for specific payment methods, offers on selected categories like frozen or pharmacy goods, and waived delivery fees above a minimum cart value.

Fig. 1.31—An Example of Swiggy Instamart's Incentives to Maximize Demand

Impulse buying—unplanned purchases driven by sudden urges—is significantly amplified by quick commerce compared to traditional e-commerce, as shown in Singh et al.'s (2024) study using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The rapid delivery speeds create urgency, with 68% of 500 surveyed consumers making unplanned purchases at least once a month, and 42% doing so at least once a week. A strong correlation coefficient of 0.71 was found between delivery speed and impulse buying scores, driven by convenience, emotional factors like stress and excitement, and fear of missing out (FOMO). Quick commerce provides instant gratification to 78% of consumers compared to only 35% for traditional e-commerce, but post-purchase regret is twice as high—40% versus 20%. This raises concerns about the sustainability of impulsive buying. Blinkit's average order value (AOV) stood at INR 625 as of June 2024, while the overall market's AOV rose from INR 250 to INR 500. Impulse buying now accounts for 30% of

the AOV on these platforms, compared to just 5-7% five years ago. Social media and digital marketing have since fueled this trend, encouraging consumers to buy more than necessary, boosting short-term revenue but risking long-term overconsumption, and posing severe potential implications for customers of these apps. While firms are capitalizing on this by driving FOMO through digital marketing, consumers should adopt sustainable habits to avoid unnecessary spending, regret, and overconsumption.

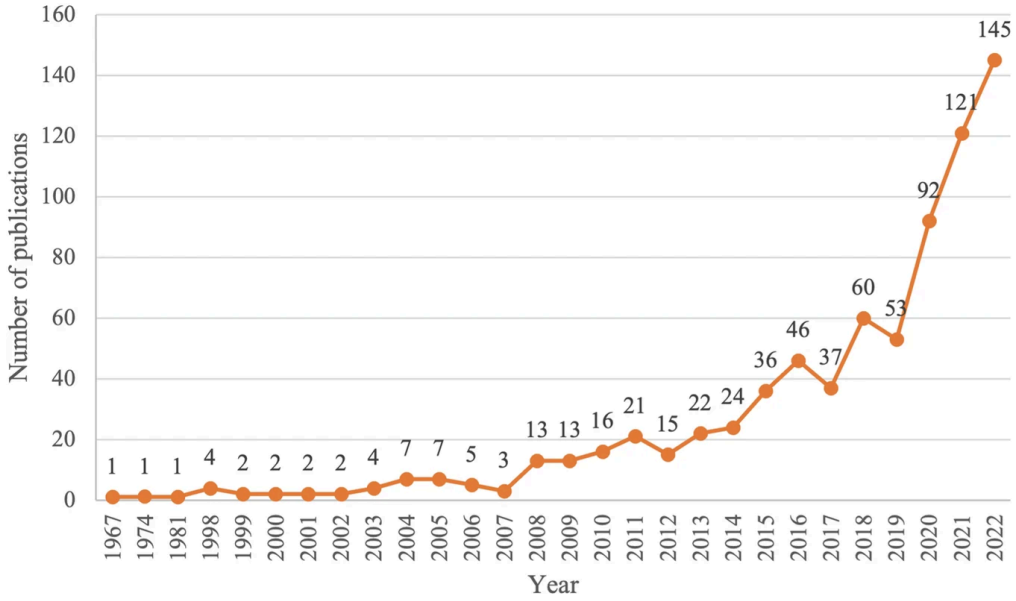

Fig. 1.32—Number of Published Papers on Impulse Buying (1967–2022) - Gong et al. (2024)

Quick commerce encourages consumers to rapidly discover and try new products, often reducing brand loyalty, but platforms counter this with loyalty programs aimed at retaining customers amid high price sensitivity and brand switching (Mahay, 2025). These programs offer exclusive rewards, discounts, and incentives to paying members, improving retention and profitability by lowering customer acquisition costs. Three main types of loyalty programs exist: points systems, tiered rewards, and loyalty cards. Point systems, such as free delivery thresholds (INR 199 for Instamart and Zepto, INR 100 for Blinkit), leverage the "point pressure effect," prompting consumers to order more to qualify for rewards, thereby increasing impulse buying and overconsumption. For example, Zepto's "Zepto Cash" credits encourage repeat purchases by pre-crediting promotional credits. Tiered programs, like Swiggy Instamart's offerings, include Swiggy One (INR 116/month for 3 months or INR 83/month for 12 months), which provides free delivery within 7 km, plus coupons; Swiggy One Lite (INR 99 for 3 months), which offers free delivery on 10 Instamart orders; and Swiggy BLCK (invite-only, INR 299 for 3 months), which offers free deliveries up to 10 km with faster service. Zepto's Zepto Pass costs INR 299/month, offering unlimited free deliveries and discounts. These loyalty programs and discounts generate urgency and tap into loss aversion, boosting short-term sales and market share but risking long-term margin pressures if overused due to their high costs. Firms must therefore balance aggressive retention with sustainable profitability in this competitive market.

Fig. 1.33—Zepto's 'Zepto Pass' Loyalty Program

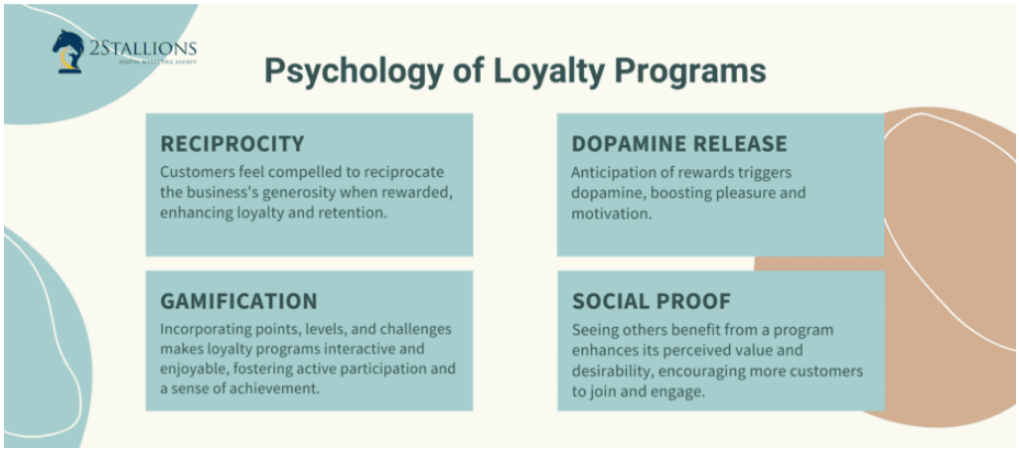

Fig. 1.34—Psychology of Loyalty Programs (2Stallions)

Psychologically, loyalty programs boost reciprocity, dopamine release, and perceived value by showing how others benefit, playing a crucial role in customer satisfaction and retention in the competitive quick commerce space. Forbes highlights that personalizing rewards, leveraging technology, and digital marketing make loyalty programs more effective as part of firms' customer relationship management (CRM) strategies, which focus on maintaining long-term customers, reducing churn, and increasing retention through personalized experiences, affordable loyalty tiers, and efficient communication. While attracting new customers via social media and brand collaborations, firms must balance discount use with pricing strategies to sustain profitability. These marketing tactics are vital for sustaining demand and loyalty as the industry expands but pose risks: increased impulse buying and overspending may harm consumers financially, while costly strategies may reduce profit margins and threaten firm viability. Ultimately, these dynamics and this sector's growth will significantly impact the economy and adjacent sectors like e-commerce and traditional retail. The quick commerce industry in India, which is driven by advanced supply chains, intense competition, and economic strategies like loyalty programs and

aggressive discounts, will therefore reshape consumer behavior and gig work dynamics as it continues to penetrate into the total addressable market.

SECTION 2: SURVEY METHODOLOGY & RESULTS

2.1 - Survey Design & Analysis

2.1.1 – Survey Instrument

The survey, conducted online primarily in Bangalore, targeted a wide age range, focusing on younger adults (18-24) and those aged 35-64, to analyze consumer preferences, behaviors, and patterns related to the growing quick commerce sector in India. It covered areas such as reasons behind platform preferences, frequency of purchases online and offline, satisfaction levels, willingness to wait, concerns about using these apps, and scenarios where quick commerce is preferred. Additionally, it examined changes in usage compared to the previous year, loyalty program participation, influence on spending, and awareness of impulse buying. Overall, the main variables of interest include consumer preferences, purchase frequency over time, satisfaction and concerns, loyalty program engagement, impulse buying awareness, and use-case scenarios. The survey explores and analyzes relationships between these variables to better understand consumer behavior and attitudes in order to determine the impact of quick commerce's growth on them. The data for this survey was collected through multiple-choice questions administered via Google Forms. Upon completion, Google Forms automatically generated various pie charts and graphical summaries, which were used for preliminary analysis. To conduct a more detailed examination of age-specific and employment-specific patterns, the dataset was exported to Google Sheets, where filters were applied to segment responses by age group and employment status. This enabled the identification of distinct trends and preferences within demographic subsets, providing deeper insights into how different groups of respondents engage with quick commerce platforms.

2.1.2 – Data Collection and Sample

The survey was conducted between January and March 2025 and distributed exclusively via WhatsApp groups—comprising the author's personal and professional network and broader community groups within the Bangalore metropolitan area. Bangalore was selected, as it is one of India's primary q-commerce markets. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and no incentive was offered for completion. The survey received 128 complete responses from various age groups, employment statuses, and marital statuses, with women comprising nearly 75% of participants. While geographically limited, the survey aimed to provide an initial understanding of consumer preferences and patterns related to quick commerce, serving as a foundation for future, broader studies.

Demographic Variable	Category	n	% of Total
Age	18–24 years	51	39.8%
	25–34 years	17	13.3%
	35–44 years	27	21.1%

Demographic Variable	Category	n	% of Total
	45–54 years	29	22.7%
	55+ years	4	3.1%
Gender	Female	~96	~75%
	Male	~32	~25%
Employment	Salaried Worker	42	32.8%
	Homemaker	31	24.2%
	Student	26	20.3%
	Self-Employed	24	18.8%
	Retired / Unemployed	5	3.9%

Table 2.1 – Demographic Profile of Survey Sample (n = 128)

2.1.3 – Limitations of the Survey

Several limitations must be acknowledged before interpreting findings. First, the sample is a convenience sample recruited through the author's WhatsApp networks; it does not constitute a random or representative sample of Bangalore residents or Indian q-commerce users more broadly. Second, the geographic concentration in Bangalore limits generalizability to other Indian cities—particularly Tier 2 and 3 markets where q-commerce penetration, infrastructure, and demographics differ substantially. Third, the gender imbalance (~75% female) may introduce bias, as shopping preferences and frequency may differ by gender. Fourth, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference: associations between variables (e.g., loyalty program participation and overconsumption) reflect co-occurrence rather than causation. Fifth, self-reported measures of impulse buying and overconsumption are subject to social desirability bias. These limitations are discussed further in Section 4.2.

2.2 - Survey Results

Among respondents, 60.8% of those aged 45-54 (31 of 51) preferred online shopping, indicating growing adoption in older groups. The 35-44 age group showed the highest preference at 63% (17 of 27), compared to 48.3% for ages 18-24 and only 31.6% (6 of 21) for those 55 and above, reflecting potential habitual and technological barriers among seniors. Concerns among the 55+ group included poor customer support (8 of 21), convenience and habit favoring physical stores (9 of 21), and fresher produce perceived in offline stores (17 of 21). In contrast, only 58.6% of 18-44-year-olds prioritized fresher produce, while 81% emphasized increased convenience and saved time as key drivers for online shopping. For the 45-54 group, 'Increased Convenience' (35 of 51) and 'Saved Time' or 'Emergencies' (33 of 51) were key influences, illustrating generational shifts in shopping motivations and varying priorities favoring convenience amongst younger generations. A chi-square test of association between age group

and online shopping preference yielded $\chi^2(3) = 7.66$, $p = .054$, indicating a borderline statistically significant association that should be interpreted with caution given the sample size.

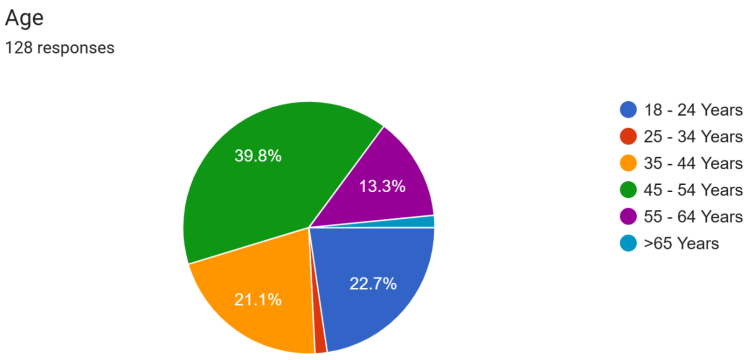

Fig. 2.1—Breakup of the Age Groups of 128 Surveyed Individuals

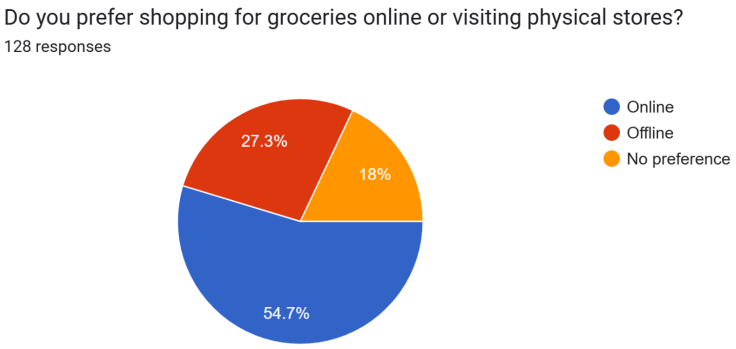

Fig. 2.2—Shopping Preferences of 128 Individuals Surveyed

Employment Status	Surveyed	Prefer Online	Selected 'Increased Convenience'	Selected 'Fresher Produce'
Salaried Worker	42	26 (62%)	35 (83%)	27 (64%)
Self-Employed	24	12 (50%)	13 (54%)	13 (54%)
Homemaker	31	16 (52%)	19 (61%)	28 (90%)
Retired	4	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	3 (75%)
Student	26	14 (54%)	22 (85%)	16 (62%)
Unemployed	1	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)

Table 2.2—Relationship between Employment Status and Consumer Attitudes. Chi-square test: employment vs. convenience selection: $\chi^2(3) = 10.35$, $p = .016$. Chi-square test: homemakers vs. others on fresher produce: $\chi^2(1) = 7.70$, $p = .006$.

Among occupational groups, salaried workers were the largest segment preferring online shopping—26 out of 42 (62%)—followed by students and homemakers. Convenience was a key driver: 35 salaried workers and 22 of 26 students cited it as a top factor, outweighing concerns about fresh produce. In contrast, while 19 of 31 homemakers valued convenience, 28 emphasized fresher produce, suggesting heightened health and hygiene concerns among this group—a statistically significant difference from other employment groups ($\chi^2(1) = 7.70$, $p = .006$). Platform preference was relatively split, with Blinkit (28.1%) and Swiggy Instamart (25.8%) leading, followed by Zepto (14.1%), though the sample size limits generalizability. Usage frequency showed a strong trend: 53 respondents (41.1%) used quick commerce platforms 3–6 times weekly, and 83 (64.8%) used them 3+ times per week. When asked about future use, 63 individuals (49.2%) rated their likelihood to increase usage between 3 and 5 on a 5-point scale. Notably, 80.5% (103 respondents) reported a significant increase in usage compared to the previous year (95% Wilson CI: 72.8%–86.4%)—underscoring a rising trajectory that warrants deeper discussion on the long-term sustainability and consequences of this rapid growth.

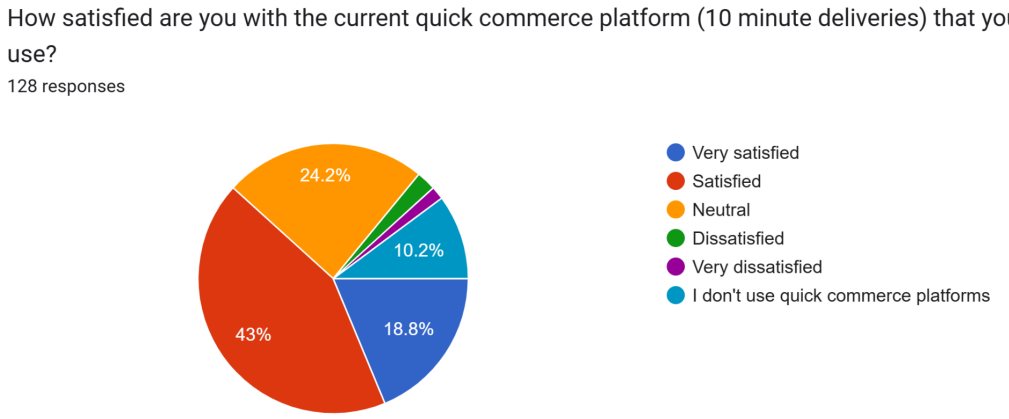

Fig. 2.4—Satisfaction Ratings of 128 Surveyed Individuals

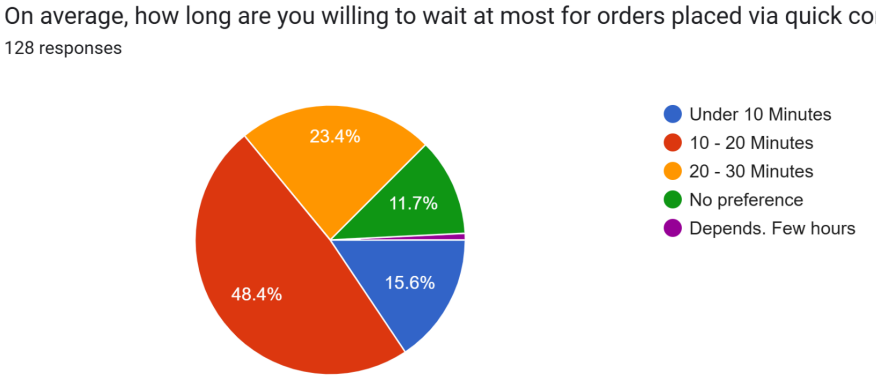

Fig. 2.5 - 128 Surveyed Customers' Preferences on Waiting Times

Among the surveyed individuals, 61.7% expressed satisfaction with quick commerce services (95% Wilson CI: 53.1%–69.7%), while 24.2% remained neutral, indicating that these platforms are largely meeting consumer expectations, particularly in delivering instant gratification. However, key concerns were also highlighted: 53.1% cited expensive prices and delivery fees, 50% noted poor product quality, packaging, and availability, and 38.3% raised environmental concerns. Additional issues included lack of variety (25%), app glitches (18.8%), delivery reliability (21.9%), and poor customer support (24.2%). While some of these challenges—such as software glitches and delivery issues—may improve with technological advancements like AI integration, others, like environmental impact and accessibility for older users, require more targeted, long-term solutions. With 64% of individuals willing to wait at most under 20 minutes, as shown on the chart above, firms are also presented with the challenge of improving their efficiency and increasing the speed of their deliveries. Addressing these concerns will be essential to ensuring the sustainable growth and broader acceptance of quick commerce platforms.

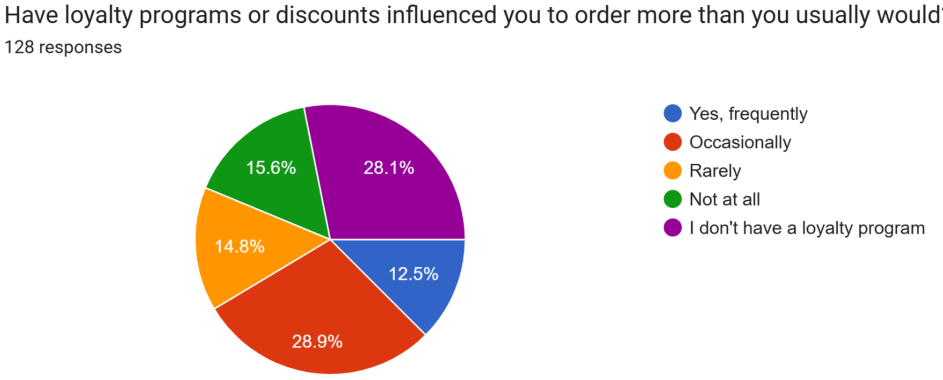

Fig. 2.6—The Influence of Loyalty Programs on 128 Surveyed Individuals

39.1% (50 individuals) of respondents reported having an active loyalty program (95% Wilson CI: 31.0%–47.7%), and 41.4% (53 individuals) stated they were influenced to order more due to these programs or discounts (95% Wilson CI: 33.2%–50.1%)—highlighting the effectiveness of current marketing strategies. Additionally, 37.5% (48 respondents) admitted to buying more than required (95% Wilson CI: 29.6%–46.1%), reflecting the influence of impulse buying. This trend was notably high amongst students, with over 50% acknowledging overconsumption—posing long-term sustainability and financial concerns, especially for non-earning individuals. These attitudes amongst consumers, while driving short-term engagement and sales, strain company profitability due to heavy reliance on discounts. A key driver of overbuying was the effort to reach minimum thresholds for free delivery, with 74.2% (95 respondents; 95% Wilson CI: (66.0%–81.0%), citing this as the reason. Other triggers included discounts (25.8%), impulse buying (17.2%), and stockpiling (14.1%). These findings point to the double-edged nature of current strategies: while effective for demand generation, they risk long-term consequences such as increased consumer debt, food waste, and company losses—calling for a shift towards more sustainable pricing and consumption models in order to become profitable in the long run.

Finally, survey respondents offered valuable insights into the anticipated trajectory of the quick commerce industry. A significant share (45.3%) predicted wider product variety, while 23.4% foresaw faster deliveries—both signaling expectations of continued technological advancement and service optimization. Additionally, 33.6% expected better conditions for gig workers, highlighting increasing consumer awareness of ethical concerns. Many also forecast lower prices (50%), expansion into tier 2 and 3 cities (53.1%), and mergers among top players (43%), indicating belief in the industry's consolidation and national growth. The most commonly cited prediction (54.7%) was increased use of AI and emerging technologies, which aligns with current innovations like automated picking systems and demand-prediction algorithms. Consumer suggestions reinforced these projections, calling for improved driver pay and safety, fresher produce, better customer support, reduced packaging waste, and higher product variety. While expectations for growth and efficiency are strong, these aspirations must be balanced against urgent concerns about sustainability, overconsumption, and labor conditions.

Evidence Summary Table

Claim / Finding	Source	Type
61.7% of respondents expressed satisfaction (95% CI: 53.1–69.7%)	Original survey (n=128)	Survey
74.2% of overbuyers cited min. delivery thresholds (95% CI: 66.0–81.0%)	Original survey (n=128)	Survey
41.4% influenced to order more by loyalty programs (95% CI: 33.2–50.1%)	Original survey (n=128)	Survey
80.5% reported increased usage vs. prior year (95% CI: 72.8–86.4%)	Original survey (n=128)	Survey

Claim / Finding	Source	Type
Employment × convenience: $\chi^2(3)=10.35$, p=.016	Original survey (n=128)	Survey
Blinkit market share ~41–46%; Zepto ~20–29%; Instamart ~23–25%	Citi (2025); Motilal Oswal (2025)	Industry report
Q-commerce grew 73% YoY in FY2023–24 vs 14% for broader e-commerce	Chryseum (2024)	Industry report
97.6% of Indian gig workers earn under INR 5 lakh/year	TeamLease (2025)	Industry report
Gig workforce expected to reach 23 million by 2029–30	NITI Aayog	Government/Academic
Correlation between delivery speed and impulse buying (r = 0.71)	Singh et al. (2024)	Academic literature
Q-commerce may contribute 1.25% to GDP by 2030	Forum for Progressive Gig Workers (2024)	Policy body
AI and automation projected to improve supply chain efficiency	Afroz et al. (2023)	Academic literature
Drone delivery pilots with Zepto/Swiggy underway in Gurgaon	Economic Times (2025)	Journalism/Speculation

Table 2.3 – Summary Table Separating Evidence from Original Survey, Published Literature/Industry Reports, and Forward-Looking Projections

SECTION 3: EMPLOYMENT DYNAMICS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND IMPLICATIONS

Note: This section presents a structured literature review of gig employment in the q-commerce sector. In the absence of primary interview data with delivery partners or dark store workers, all findings are derived from academic research, government reports, and industry analyses. Definitions are standardized throughout: "delivery partners" refers to last-mile courier gig workers, while "dark store workers" refers to in-store picking and packing staff. Where sources conflate food delivery gig work with q-commerce gig work, this is noted explicitly.

Section 3.1 - The Gig Economy - Advantages

The gig economy, defined by short-term contracts and freelance work rather than permanent employment, has reshaped India's labor market. As quick commerce platforms rapidly scale operations, especially into

tier 2 and 3 cities, gig-based employment is poised to expand significantly. India's gig workforce currently comprises 7.7 million individuals and is projected to reach 23 million by 2029–30. Quick commerce alone employs 300,000–400,000 gig workers—approximately 3.9–5.2% of the total—with a 3:1 ratio between delivery partners and dark store workers. According to Business Standard, this segment saw an annual growth rate of 77% between FY23 and FY24, compared to just 14% for broader e-commerce. In 2025, hiring is expected to rise by 60%, reaching around 500,000 workers. With a projected CAGR of 17%, the sector could contribute 1.25% to India's GDP by 2030 and potentially generate up to 90 million jobs, as per the Forum for Progressive Gig Workers (Business Standard). Large e-commerce firms such as Amazon, Flipkart, and Myntra are also expected to enter the space, accelerating recruitment and increasing job opportunities. A typical dark store employs 30–35 in-house staff and 120–140 delivery workers, underscoring the sector's growing demand for flexible labor.

City Type	Monthly Salary	Annual Salary
Metro	INR 18,000–23,000	INR 216,000–276,000
Non-Metro	INR 15,000–20,000	INR 180,000–240,000

Table 3.1—Estimated Salary, Delivery Partners, Quick Commerce (Business Standard)

Dark store workers typically earn between INR 12,000 and 18,000 per month (INR 144,000–216,000 annually), often less than delivery partners. Additional earnings may come through incentives ranging from INR 2,000–5,000, attendance bonuses (INR 500–1,500), retention bonuses (INR 1,000–3,000), and seasonal performance bonuses. To join as a delivery partner, individuals must provide essential documents—PAN card, registration certificate, insurance, driver's license, address proof, and a bank account—along with a two-wheeler and a smartphone with internet access. Workers must also be at least 18 years old. Companies like Blinkit offer weekly payouts, flexible schedules (4, 6, or 10-hour shifts), and free accidental and medical insurance, which appeal to many seeking autonomy and control over their work life. This flexibility is particularly valuable in times of economic instability, allowing individuals to balance family responsibilities, such as childcare. According to the Forum for Progressive Gig Workers, this model also increases earning potential for women. Efforts to improve working conditions—providing raincoats, rest areas, and water access—further support long-term sustainability, retention, and improved working conditions. With a national illiteracy rate of 27% and an unemployment rate of 3.2% in 2023–24, the low entry barriers for gig work present vital employment opportunities. The National Council of Economic Research found that only 54% of gig workers had completed Class 12, highlighting the sector's accessibility to individuals without formal education and its potential to uplift low-income households.

With a record increase of 100% in gig employment in smaller cities—where quick commerce firms are rapidly expanding—new employment opportunities are emerging across the country. For firms, gig employment has proven advantageous due to several key factors:

- Lower operational costs, as there is no requirement for formal training, office space, or equipment.

- Scalability during peak demand periods, allowing firms to quickly increase capacity without long-term commitments.
- Access to a large, diverse, and flexible workforce that is readily available and willing to take up short-term assignments.

These factors contribute to long-term cost efficiency and enable firms to expand while also helping to reduce the unemployment rate in India. Additionally, wage trends demonstrate the growing viability of gig work. According to Teamlease Digital, quick commerce workers' salaries are rising faster than those of IT freshers. In 2024, dark store workers saw a 9.15% increase in earnings, and delivery partners experienced an 11.57% rise, compared to just 5.97% growth in IT fresher salaries. With delivery partners earning an average of INR 312,000 annually versus INR 414,000 for IT freshers, the wage gap continues to narrow—further establishing gig work as a competitive and increasingly attractive employment option for several Indians.

QComm Workers Earnings Vs IT Fresher Salaries

Y-0-Y	Quick Commerce (Dark Store) (LPA)	YOY Growth%	Delivery Partner Base Pay(LPA)	YOY Growth%	IT Products & Services CTC(LPA)	YOY Growth%
2022-23	1,80,000		223140		364992	
2023-24	2,20,824	20.37% growth	277860	21.8% growth	390000	6.62% growth
2024-25	2,42,000	9.15% growth	312000	11.57% growth	414000	5.97% growth
Source	Teamlease Digital					

Fig. 3.12—Quick Commerce Workers vs IT Freshers Employment Comparisons (Teamlease Digital)

With IT fresher salaries stagnating and gig worker earnings rising, gig work is becoming a more attractive option for unemployed or less-educated individuals. Although there are drawbacks, the faster growth of quick commerce over traditional retail suggests it may soon dominate, as survey results in Section 2.2 also indicate. As this shift continues, delivery roles may offer more security than traditional retail jobs, which could decline with changing consumer preferences. The younger generation's focus on convenience is likely to reduce demand for in-store roles, therefore putting more employment opportunities in the hands of gig workers.

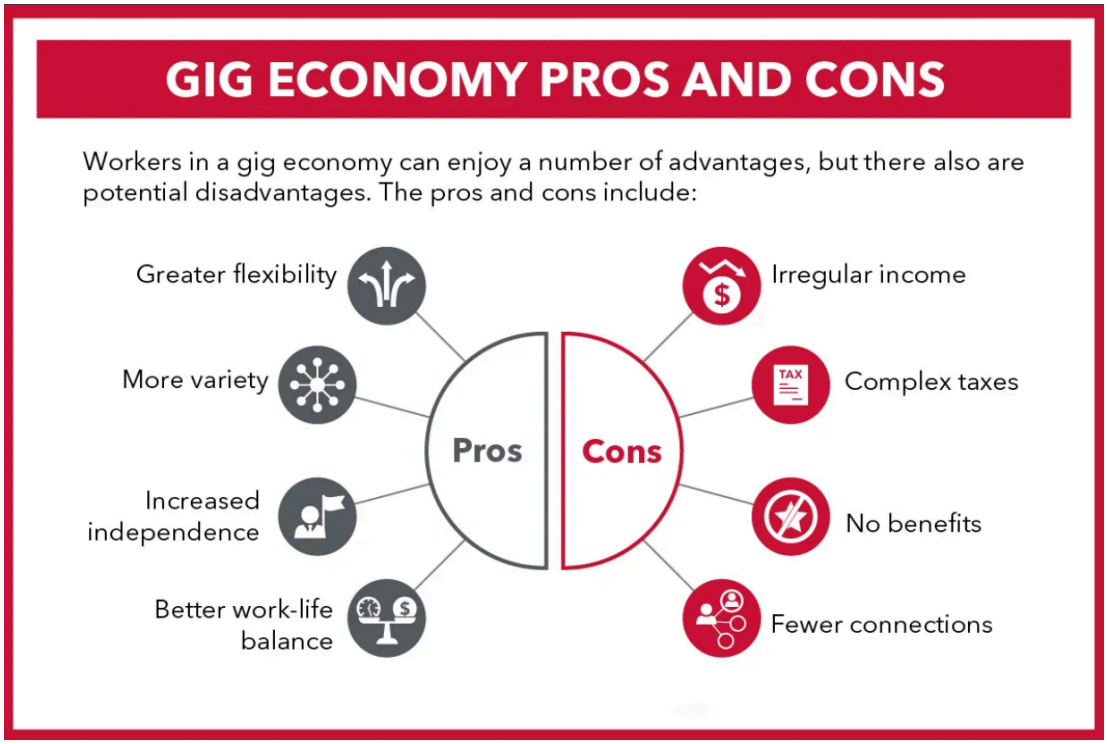

Fig. 3.13—Gig Economy's Pros and Cons (Drishti IAS)

As established, the growth of quick commerce directly supports the expansion of the gig economy, offering benefits to both workers and firms. The sector's rising contribution to GDP is driven by several key factors:

- **Digital penetration:** Expanding internet access, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, is increasing demand in tier 2 and 3 cities.
- **Consumer preference for convenience:** As highlighted in the survey, growing expectations for faster deliveries are generating more gig roles.
- **Market expansion:** With more firms entering the sector and investing in infrastructure (e.g., Amazon), new employment opportunities continue to emerge.
- **Rising cost of living and unemployment:** Paired with improved welfare efforts, these pressures are pushing more individuals—especially those with limited formal education—into gig work.
- **Flexible work preferences:** Particularly among women and caregivers, flexibility and work-life balance are becoming key motivators.
- **Role diversification:** As AI and tech adoption rise, higher-skilled roles in logistics and support will grow, encouraging upskilling and increasing competition and pay.

Despite these benefits, challenges remain, which will be discussed in the next section. As survey responses revealed, concerns around pay volatility, safety, and support highlight the need for firms to ensure sustainable and fair work conditions. Firms must prioritize worker development, provide skill-building opportunities, and offer protections such as minimum wage guarantees and control over

working hours. Enhancing benefits, fostering open communication, and establishing safeguards against exploitation will not only improve worker well-being but also enhance productivity and service quality—ultimately benefiting firms and consumers as well.

Section 3.2—The Drawbacks of the Gig Economy

Note: Some of the following evidence is drawn from food delivery platforms more broadly (e.g., Swiggy, Zomato) rather than q-commerce specifically due to limited sector-specific data. These findings may not apply uniformly to q-commerce gig workers and are flagged accordingly.

While the gig economy continues to grow and working conditions are gradually improving, serious concerns remain. A 2023 study by the National Institute for Workers' Rights found that 54% of gig workers lack access to employer-based benefits, including health and retirement plans. While this reduces costs for quick commerce firms, it undermines long-term worker welfare and labor standards. Gig workers also face no employment protection, exposing them to unfair dismissals and frequent layoffs. Despite their critical role, they often earn very little. According to TeamLease (Feb 2025), 97.6% of Indian gig workers earn under ₹5 lakh/year, with 77.6% earning below ₹2.5 lakh. Most work long hours: 85% for 8+ hours/day and 21% for over 12 hours. As per Shaik Salauddin (IFAT), payouts from platforms like Swiggy and Zomato have dropped sharply, with commissions falling from ₹35 to ₹10–15 per delivery—though these figures relate primarily to food delivery. Many workers now earn approximately ₹10,000/month, far below initially advertised figures of ₹30,000–₹40,000. This highlights the volatility and unsustainability of gig roles, especially as companies push for efficiency and cost cuts. As firms adopt more automation and aim to offer cheaper services, worker wages may stagnate or fall, leading to greater income inequality and potential labor unrest. Without regulation or improved safeguards, gig work risks becoming increasingly exploitative and unstable in the long run.

Working conditions in quick commerce are often poor, especially with the pressure of 10–15 minute delivery promises. According to Fortune India and a report by Borzo (2025), these short delivery windows increase driver stress, physical strain, and urgency, significantly compromising worker well-being. In fact, 80.6% of workers felt 60-minute deliveries were safe, compared to only 19.4% for 15-minute deliveries—highlighting that workers themselves perceive 15-minute deliveries as unsafe. This heightened pressure may contribute to unsafe road practices and long-term mental health issues, making quick commerce an increasingly stressful sector for gig workers.

Metric	15-Minute Deliveries	60-Minute Deliveries
% of workers finding deliveries physically challenging	34.1%	26.7%
% of workers feeling stressed	57.3%	42.7%
% of workers feeling sense of urgency	32.3%	19.0%
% of workers feeling safe	19.4%	80.6%

Table 3.2—Data from Surveyed Gig Workers (Borzo Report, 2025). Note: The source covers food delivery workers broadly; q-commerce-specific figures are not separately reported.

A survey by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) of 924 food delivery workers revealed that 39.7% of workers in smaller cities are overqualified, with 12.5% holding technical or vocational degrees. Among workers aged 18-35 with at least secondary education, these individuals worked 23% more hours but earned 8% less than their peers. The study also found that, after adjusting for inflation, real wages for delivery executives fell by 11% between 2019 and 2022, impacted by rising fuel and consumer prices. Notably, over one-third of these workers are graduates performing lower-skilled, lower-paying jobs, reflecting a mismatch between their education and current employment. This trend may reduce income potential and affordability for educated individuals, despite the investment of time and money made in their education.

Under the existing labor code, gig workers are neither classified as employees nor protected by worker welfare regulations. This results in job insecurity, minimal rights, including inadequate life and health insurance, and highly volatile incomes. Earnings fluctuate daily based on orders and demand, causing some workers to survive on negligible wages during slow periods. Firms can easily terminate gig workers, labeling them temporary and unreliable without obligation to provide stable income. This precarious status puts workers at risk of unemployment and financial hardship over time. While Zomato, which owns Blinkit, offers a health cover of INR 3 lakh as a loyalty benefit to workers who have been there for 2-3 years, this ability to terminate without cause results in a much smaller percentage of employees being eligible for the benefit. As more individuals join gig roles, exploitation, inconsistent payments, and financial instability are likely to increase. Without reforms, gig workers will face growing economic insecurity, with declining wages and job losses as firms prioritize cost-cutting and expansion.

Moreover, gig employment can also negatively impact workers due to lower commitment and reliability, which may reduce efficiency and profitability, potentially cutting into worker commissions and lowering living standards. Recently, Big Basket partnered with SkyeAir, a Bangalore startup using drones to deliver groceries within 10 minutes. Similar collaborations with quick commerce platforms like Zepto and Swiggy in Gurgaon signal a shift toward automation. As drone delivery becomes more efficient and affordable, firms may replace gig workers, leading to significant unemployment in the sector. This reflects the unpredictability of gig work, which is easily replaceable due to its unskilled nature and high labor supply. Additionally, drones offer environmental benefits by reducing carbon footprints, aligning with growing consumer demand for sustainability but further threatening driver jobs. AI advancements are also poised to automate the picking process, increasing accuracy and efficiency. These technological shifts highlight serious challenges for gig workers, making their roles in quick commerce increasingly unstable and unsustainable, creating uncertainty for the future of this industry and these opportunities.

SECTION 4: DISCUSSION

Section 4.1—Navigating the Future of the Gig Economy and Quick Commerce: Is It Sustainable?

Previous sections have examined the growth of India's quick commerce industry and its associated gig economy, alongside their implications for consumers and workers. To summarize, the sector is projected to grow at a CAGR of 17%, contributing 1.25% to India's GDP by 2030. Hiring is expected to increase by 60%, adding approximately 500,000 workers by CY25. With a year-on-year growth rate of 75–100%, quick commerce firms are expanding faster than traditional retail and e-commerce, aiming to capture a $45 billion addressable market (Chryseum). Consumer adoption is likely to rise, particularly among younger demographics who prioritize convenience over factors such as price and product freshness. As workforces become busier, the appeal of time-saving services is expected to drive continued use. Survey findings are broadly consistent with these projections: 80.5% of respondents reported increased platform usage over the prior year (95% Wilson CI: 72.8%–86.4%), and 49.2% rated themselves as likely to increase future usage. While brand loyalty remains limited, consistent promotions, broader product ranges, and faster delivery times are likely to sustain demand. Expansion into tier 2 and 3 cities and greater product diversification will further extend reach. However, transitioning from an emergency-use model to a daily-essentials platform will require improved customer support, an area identified as a concern in the survey from the second section. As this industry grows, consumers will also face challenges, including the following:

- **Impulse Buying:** Survey data highlights that 37.5% of respondents, including over 50% of students, reported ordering more than necessary. This pattern may be financially unsustainable, particularly for student consumers, and may encourage overconsumption. To mitigate this, it is essential that quick commerce be positioned as a platform for essential, need-based purchases rather than impulsive stockpiling.
- **Loyalty Programs:** While loyalty programs may attract users through discounts and rewards, they can further reinforce overconsumption. However, the absence of strong brand loyalty in the sector allows consumers to shift between platforms in search of better deals, often rendering such programs ineffective.
- **Unrealistic Expectations:** The normalization of rapid delivery has heightened consumer expectations, creating pressure on delivery personnel and increasing operational costs for firms. These demands also raise environmental concerns, making long-term sustainability more difficult to achieve.

As the quick commerce sector expands, firms are expected to deepen the integration of AI and automation across supply chains to enhance efficiency and productivity. To grow beyond last-minute purchases, companies must reposition quick commerce as a primary channel for daily essentials. This requires improved customer service, broader product categories, and better handling of perishable goods to address concerns around freshness and quality. Future growth areas include electronics, beauty, fashion accessories, and fitness gear—categories that could reduce reliance on physical retail. While current operations are costly and unsustainable, long-term investment in AI can lower average costs through improved speed, accuracy, and volume. Technologies such as drones and robots, already used by startups

like SkyeAir in partnership with Zepto and Swiggy, offer scalable automation in picking and delivery. AI is currently applied in real-time inventory management, route optimization, and demand forecasting, but further automation remains possible. As labor costs rise due to inflation and worker demands, reducing dependence on manual processes becomes increasingly important. Addressing the last-mile delivery challenge with advanced technology is critical to sustaining growth and profitability in the long term.

As more firms enter the market, nationwide expansion is expected. With rising average order values (AOVs) and evolving consumer habits—particularly among younger users—industry revenue is projected to reach $5.38 billion by 2025 (Statista). However, the hyperlocal model poses challenges outside dense urban areas. Expansion into tier 2 and 3 cities may compromise 10-minute delivery promises due to wider delivery radii and infrastructure limitations. Swiggy's negative PE ratio of -45.24 and reported debt of INR 10.64 billion (as of September 2024) highlight broader concerns about profitability. Additional risks include supply chain vulnerabilities, stock shortages, and demand fluctuations—all contributing to high wastage. To improve margins, firms must adopt efficient technologies and consider partnerships to reduce operating costs. With AOVs between INR 500 and 625, the current model—offering free delivery alongside high operational costs—is unsustainable. Increasing minimum order thresholds and broadening product categories are essential to achieving viable unit economics.

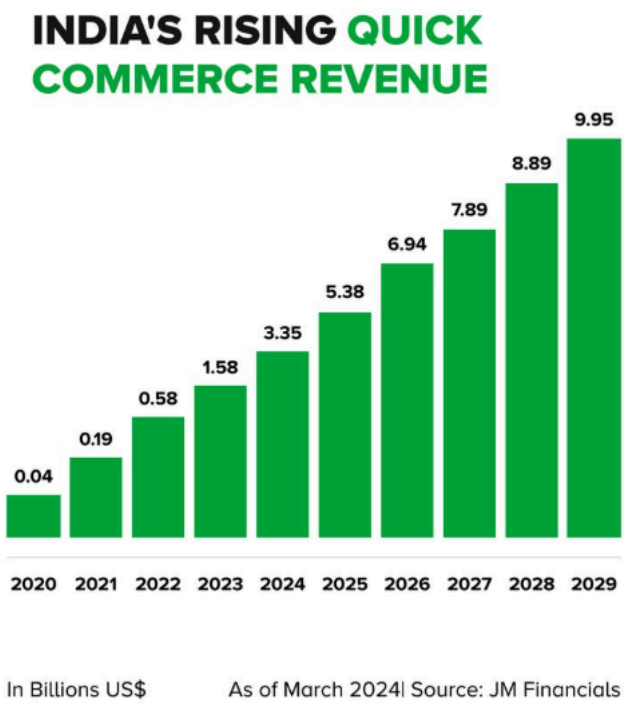

Fig. 4.1—Quick Commerce Projected Revenue in India (Billions USD), March 2024 (Market Brew, Tata Fintech & JM Financials)

Quick commerce in India faces long-term sustainability challenges despite rapid growth. It requires improved infrastructure, better worker conditions, cost efficiency, and technological integration to remain

viable. Although the gig economy may employ up to 90 million by 2030, increasing automation threatens unskilled workers with job loss and income instability. Worker exploitation persists, with low per-order commissions (INR 10–30), poor safety standards, and legal violations—highlighted by 17,218 traffic infractions involving delivery workers in Bengaluru in one week alone. Rising delivery traffic contributes to urban congestion and declining footfall in physical stores—down 28% in some regions—prompting government scrutiny and regulatory pressure. Traditional retail and small distributors are under threat, while quick commerce firms struggle to meet 10-minute delivery promises under tightening restrictions. As AI and robotics improve efficiency, firms are likely to replace human labor, leaving gig workers with limited mobility, no long-term prospects, and increasing financial instability. Overall, while quick commerce may temporarily boost employment in the informal economy, its current model poses serious risks to both labor stability and urban sustainability.

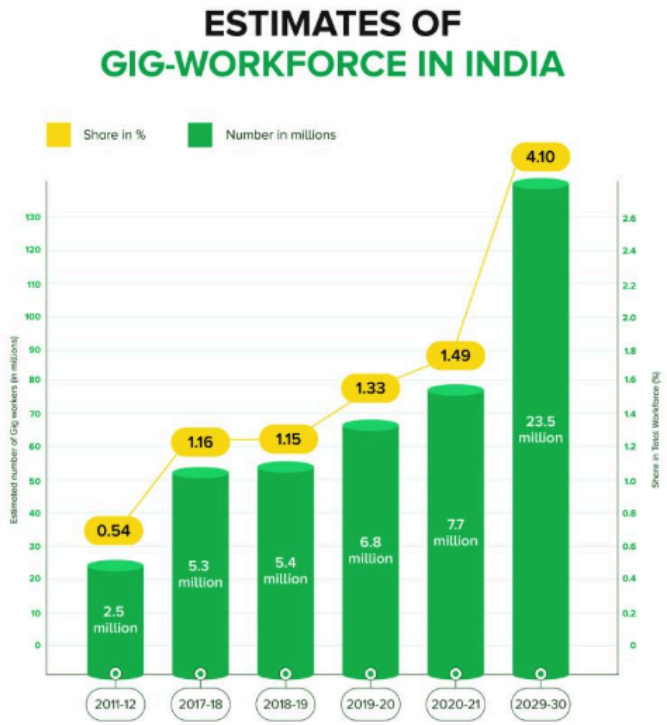

Fig. 4.2—Estimated Gig Economy Employees and Percentage in India (Market Brew, Tata Fintech & Niti Aayog Study Report)

Section 4.2 – Limitations and Future Research

This study has several important limitations. First, the consumer survey was conducted using a convenience sample—128 respondents recruited via WhatsApp groups in Bangalore—that is neither random nor nationally representative. The geographic concentration limits generalizability to other Indian cities; the gender imbalance (~75% female) may introduce bias in shopping preference data; and the online distribution channel biases the sample toward tech-savvy, digitally active consumers who are more likely to be q-commerce users than the broader population. Second, all survey measures are self-reported and cross-sectional. Impulse buying and overconsumption are susceptible to social desirability bias,

meaning the true frequency of these behaviors may be higher than reported. Critically, cross-sectional survey data cannot establish causation: the association between loyalty program participation and increased ordering frequency, for example, does not establish that loyalty programs cause overconsumption. Third, the analysis of gig employment relies entirely on secondary literature and industry reports, some of which conflate food delivery and q-commerce workers. Primary data—such as structured interviews with delivery partners and dark store workers—would substantially strengthen this section.

Future research could productively address these limitations through (1) a nationally representative, multi-city survey employing stratified random sampling across Tier 1, 2, and 3 markets; (2) qualitative or mixed-methods research incorporating in-depth interviews or ethnographic observation with gig workers; and (3) longitudinal survey designs tracking changes in consumer behavior and order frequency over time to establish stronger evidence of causal direction.

CONCLUSION

The rise of quick commerce in India is reshaping retail and e-commerce by prioritizing speed, convenience, and instant gratification of consumer needs. Buoyed by a growing Indian economy and burgeoning middle class, the quick commerce industry is projected to grow at a CAGR of 17%, and the gig workforce is expected to reach 90 million by 2030. The industry, therefore, is fueled by growing demand and a large supply of low-cost laborers. Younger demographics, in particular, are driving this shift, valuing immediacy over price or product freshness. For gig workers, quick commerce offers increased employment opportunities without the need for formal education or skills, providing a short-term source of income through commissions. However, gig workers often face poor working conditions, low wages, and minimal job security—despite projections that they could account for 4.1% of India's GDP by 2029–2030 (NITI Aayog). From a worker-benefits perspective, the gig economy is expected to remain static due to the high supply of workers ready to undertake roles, thereby creating a lack of incentive amongst firms to provide them with higher-order benefits. Therefore, the informal economy's employment will continue to rise amidst poor conditions, as it remains cost-efficient for firms even as they continue to grow.

Firms also face several challenges in their growth. Supply chain and logistical inefficiencies result in significant wastage. This results in high operational costs and low profit margins. Coupled with intense competition and high pressure for faster turnaround times (TAT), there remain high cash burn rates, raising concerns about long-term viability for quick commerce companies.

Finally, the growth of quick commerce may provide consumers with increased convenience and satisfaction. It may also result in saved time and easier access to necessities during emergencies and other urgent scenarios. Consumers in tier 2 and tier 3 cities are also expected to gain easier access to a wide array of goods through these firms, as they are expected to expand into these regions in their pursuit of a larger share of the addressable market and increased revenue. While this may be longer than the 10 minutes promised in urban regions due to dense population, consumers can still bear the same negative consequences of this growth. This includes potential risks of overconsumption and impulse buying

patterns, resulting in increased expenditure on groceries, which can be critical for financially unstable individuals in rural areas of India.

To achieve long-term sustainability, firms must invest in automation, optimize logistics, and adopt environmentally conscious practices such as shared deliveries for lower costs. Additionally, the industry's dependence on unskilled labor raises concerns about education being discouraged amongst low-income families in India, thereby reducing skilled labor and long-term income mobility. The hyperlocal model's reliance on dense urban infrastructure further limits scalability in less developed regions. Ultimately, while quick commerce may enhance short-term consumer convenience and gig employment, its future sustainability relies heavily on technological automation and innovation, improved labor practices, and environmentally sustainable yet logistically efficient practices in order to mitigate adverse social and economic consequences.

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APPENDIX

Survey Questions (128 Responses)

All questions were mandatory to respond to. Survey conducted January–March 2025 via Google Forms, distributed via WhatsApp groups in the Bangalore metropolitan area.

Q1 - Gender: Male / Female / Rather Not Say / Other

Q2 - Age: 18 - 24 Years / 25 - 34 Years / 35 - 44 Years / 45 - 54 Years / 55 - 64 Years / >65 Years

Q3 - What is your marital status?: Unmarried / Married without children / Married with children

Q4 - What is your employment status?: Student / Salaried Worker / Self-Employed / Retired from Workforce / Unemployed / Homemaker

Q5 - Do you prefer shopping for groceries online or visiting physical stores?: Offline / Online / No preference

Q6 - Which quick commerce app do you use most frequently?: Swiggy Instamart / Zepto / Blinkit / I don't order food and groceries online

Q7 - Approximately how many times per week do you totally purchase groceries and other essentials (online and offline together)?: <3 Times / 3-6 Times / 7-10 Times / >10 Times

Q8 - Approximately how many times per week do you purchase these groceries and essentials using quick commerce apps (10 minute deliveries)?: None of the times / <3 Times / 3-6 Times / 7-10 Times / >10 Times

Q9 - On a scale from 1 to 5, how likely are you to increase the number of times you order online from quick commerce apps? (1 = Extremely Unlikely; 5 = Extremely Likely)

Q10 - If you decide to shop online through quick commerce apps, what factors influence your preference over shopping at physical grocery stores? (Select all that apply): Increased Convenience / Saved Time / Saved Energy / More Variety Online / Cheaper Prices / Emergencies / Other

Q11 - If you decide to shop at a local grocery store physically, what factors make you prefer them over online platforms? (Select all that apply): Better Pricing / Fresher Produce / No delivery fees / Convenient / Habit / No waiting / Better variety / Other

Q12 - How satisfied are you with the current quick commerce platform (10 minute deliveries) that you use?: Very satisfied / Satisfied / Neutral / Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied / I don't use quick commerce platforms

Q13 - On average, how long are you willing to wait at most for orders placed via quick commerce apps?: Under 10 Minutes / 10-20 Minutes / 20-30 Minutes / No preference / Depends. Few hours

Q14 - How has your usage of quick commerce platforms changed compared to last year, on a scale of 1-5? (1 = Much less frequently; 5 = Much more frequently)

Q15 - What concerns do you have about using quick commerce services? (Select all that apply): Delivery reliability / Expensive prices and delivery fees / Poor product quality, packaging and availability / Environmental impact / Poor customer support / App glitches and payment failures / Lack of variety in options / Other

Q16 - In what scenarios do you think quick commerce is most useful? (Select all that apply): Late night needs and emergencies / Everyday needs / Urgent needs / Forgotten items / Other

Q17 - Do you have an active loyalty program with any of these platforms?: Yes / No

Q18 - Have loyalty programs or discounts influenced you to order more than you usually would?: Yes, frequently / Occasionally / Rarely / Not at all / I don't have a loyalty program

Q19 - I often buy more than I need when using these platforms: Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neutral / Agree / Strongly Agree

Q20 - Why do you think you would buy more than you need when using these platforms? (Select all that apply): To reach the minimum for free delivery / Due to discounts or coupons or loyalty programs / To stock up for later / It is more convenient to order in bulk online / Impulse buying / Other

Q21 - Which of the following changes do you think are most likely to happen in the quick commerce industry in the next 2 years? (Select all that apply): Deliveries will get faster / Prices will become more competitive and cheaper / Implementing AI and emerging technologies / More eco-friendly packaging / Mergers amongst top players / Increased focus on tier 2 and 3 cities / Wider product variety / Improved conditions for workers / Other

Q22 - Personally, what would be the most important improvement you would like to see in this industry?: (Open text response)