

Consumer Psychology of Instant Gratification in Quick Commerce: Why Do Indians Choose 10-Minute Delivery?

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Abstract:

This research explores the psychological drivers behind the rapid adoption of quick commerce (Q-commerce) in India, focusing on the "10-minute delivery" model. The study posits that the primary motivator for consumer adoption is not merely convenience but the fulfillment of the innate human desire for instant gratification. Through a proposed mixed-method approach combining a primary survey of urban consumers with an analysis of secondary industry data, this paper investigates the interplay between speed, convenience, price, and impulse buying behavior. Simulated results indicate that the "Need for Instant Gratification" and "Time-Saving" value are the most significant predictors of Q-commerce usage, far outweighing price sensitivity. Furthermore, the research highlights a strong correlation between frequent Q-commerce use and an increase in unplanned, impulse-driven purchases, suggesting that these platforms are fundamentally reshaping consumer shopping habits from a "plan-and-execute" to a "feel-and-react" model. The paper concludes by discussing the managerial implications for Q-commerce platforms and FMCG brands and outlines directions for future empirical research.

Keywords — *Quick Commerce, Instant Gratification, Consumer Psychology, Impulse Buying, E-commerce, India.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian retail sector is witnessing a profound transformation, spearheaded by the meteoric rise of quick commerce (Q-commerce). Positioned as the third generation of commerce, this model represents a radical evolution from traditional e-commerce by prioritizing unprecedented delivery speed. Q-commerce is defined by its ultra-fast fulfillment of orders, typically delivering groceries, essentials, and a growing range of other products within a 10 to 30-minute window from a network of hyperlocal micro-fulfillment centers, or "dark stores" [2, 8]. The Indian market has proven to be uniquely fertile ground for this model, propelled by a confluence of high urban population density, relatively low labor costs, rising disposable incomes, and widespread smartphone penetration [5, 8]. This has fueled explosive growth, with market projections indicating a surge to a formidable \$5 billion by 2025, and some estimates suggesting a potential market size of \$57 billion by 2030 [4, 8, 9].

At the heart of this disruption is the "10-minute delivery" promise. This is not merely a logistical achievement but a potent psychological anchor that has fundamentally reshaped consumer expectations [9, 11]. Platforms like Zomato's Blinkit, Zepto, and Swiggy Instamart have become the architects of this new standard, catering directly to the time-starved lifestyles of modern urban

consumers and their escalating demand for on-demand solutions [11]. Where traditional retail competes on location and assortment, and e-commerce on price and breadth of selection, Q-commerce introduces immediacy as the dominant variable. By promising fulfillment in a timeframe that feels almost instantaneous, it taps directly into the brain's reward system far more effectively than any previous retail model [14, 13]. This shift in the value equation means the psychological benefit of "having it now" can often override rational considerations, such as paying a small premium in delivery fees or accepting a limited product selection [16].

While convenience is the apparent driver, the sheer velocity of Q-commerce adoption suggests deeper psychological forces are at play. This paper posits that its appeal lies in its ability to satisfy the innate human desire for instant gratification. The research problem is to dissect this psychological construct and establish its role as the primary motivator for choosing 10-minute delivery. Understanding these behavioral underpinnings offers critical insights for businesses and marketers navigating this new retail frontier [15, 18].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Evolution from E-commerce to Q-commerce

The emergence of Q-commerce is a direct descendant of the e-commerce revolution but operates on a different logistical paradigm. Traditional e-commerce relies on large, centralized warehouses, offering a vast selection with delivery times measured in days. In contrast, Q-commerce is built on a decentralized network of small, hyperlocal "dark stores," each serving a radius of a few kilometers. This infrastructure necessitates a curated inventory of only the most in-demand items—typically 2,000 to 6,000 SKUs—to ensure rapid picking and packing [3, 26]. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a powerful catalyst, normalizing the online purchase of daily essentials and creating an acute consumer need for immediate, contactless fulfillment [1, 27].

B. The Indian Q-commerce Ecosystem: An Analysis of Market Dynamics

The Indian Q-commerce market has demonstrated a resilience and growth trajectory that has defied global trends. The sector is projected to grow at 75-100% year-on-year, far outpacing traditional retail [11, 31]. A 2025 report by Bain & Company and Flipkart highlights that Q-commerce already commands over two-thirds of all online grocery orders and constitutes 10% of India's total e-retail spending [21, 31]. A Meta study found that over 91% of online consumers in India are aware of Q-commerce, with 57% reporting increased spending on them [24, 32]. The core user base is comprised of tech-savvy, time-poor urban millennials and Gen Z consumers who value speed [9, 32]. The economic model is uniquely viable due to high population density and lower operational costs compared to Western markets [5, 33].

C. Theoretical Framework: The Psychology of Instant Gratification

The compelling pull of Q-commerce can be understood through established psychological theories. At its core is the "pleasure principle," which posits that the human psyche is driven to seek immediate pleasure [29, 36]. On a neurological level, the anticipation and receipt of a quick reward—such as a product arriving minutes after ordering—triggers a release of dopamine, reinforcing the behavior [15, 37, 38]. This can create a powerful "addictive loop" [14, 38]. This process is amplified by cognitive biases like "hyperbolic discounting," where individuals show a preference for a smaller, immediate reward over a larger, delayed one [18, 39]. This explains why a consumer might willingly pay a fee for 10-minute delivery rather than wait a day for free delivery.

D. Instant Gratification, Impulse Buying, and the Digital Consumer

The online environment is a potent amplifier of impulsive behaviors. Digital platforms facilitate impulse buying through personalized recommendations, promotional urgency, and frictionless checkout processes [30, 43]. Q-commerce adds the ultimate stimulus: near-instantaneous fulfillment of the impulse. Studies on Indian consumers reveal a high propensity for online impulse buying, particularly among younger cohorts driven by hedonic shopping motivations [32, 44]. There is a symbiotic relationship: the need for instant gratification creates the market for Q-commerce, which in turn is engineered to cultivate impulse buying. This is supported by a Datum Intelligence report, which found that 75% of online grocery shoppers reported an increase in unplanned purchases after using Q-commerce platforms [37, 50]. Consequently, Q-commerce does not merely serve existing demand; it actively creates incremental, impulse-driven demand, driving 6-8% in incremental household consumption among its users [39, 52].

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

A. Research Objectives and Questions

The primary aim of this study is to delve into the psychological underpinnings of Q-commerce adoption in India. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify and analyze the primary psychological drivers for the adoption of Q-commerce services.
2. To evaluate the relative importance of speed, convenience, price, and product assortment.
3. To investigate the relationship between Q-commerce usage and impulse buying.
4. To explore how demographic and lifestyle factors moderate the preference for 10-minute delivery.

B. Research Design

This study proposes a mixed-method approach, integrating quantitative analysis from a primary survey with qualitative insights from an extensive review of secondary data. This allows for both statistical validation and a nuanced understanding of consumer motivations.

C. Data Sources

The research will use primary and secondary data. Primary data will be from a structured online survey of 150 active Q-commerce users in India's top metro cities, which account for the majority of order volume [23, 69, 70, 71]. Secondary data is grounded in academic journals and

authoritative industry reports from firms like Bain & Company, BCG, and Kearney [21, 26, 30, 39, 43, 72, 73].

D. Survey Instrument Design

The survey will be a structured questionnaire using 5-point Likert scales and multiple-choice questions, covering: demographics, usage patterns, motivational drivers (e.g., Need for Instant Gratification, Price Sensitivity), and a validated scale to measure impulse buying tendency [36, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80].

E. Variables and Analytical Tools

The data analysis will be conducted using SPSS. The study will examine the relationship between independent variables (e.g., Perceived Convenience, Need for Instant Gratification) and dependent variables (Frequency of Q-commerce Use, Impulse Buying Score). Correlation and multiple regression analysis will be used to identify the most influential factors.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Profile of the Indian Q-commerce User

TABLE I SUMMARY OF RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS (SIMULATED DATA)

Variable	Category	Percentage
Age	18-25	35%
	26-35	36%
	36-45	21%
	>45	8%
Occupation	Salaried Professional	58%
	Student	22%
	Business Owner	14%
	Other	6%
Income (Monthly)	< ₹50,000	12%
	₹50,001 - ₹1,00,000	23%
	> ₹1,00,000	65%

The survey data, summarized in TABLE I, paints a clear picture of the archetypal user: predominantly young (71% aged 18-35), a salaried professional, residing in a major metro, and with high disposable income. This aligns with industry observations of a user base that is urban, digitally native, and values time, making them receptive to services offering speed [9, 91].

B. The Primacy of Immediacy over Price

TABLE II MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF FACTORS PREDICTING Q-COMMERCE USAGE FREQUENCY (SIMULATED DATA)

Variable	Beta (β)	p-value	Significance
Need for Instant Gratification	0.412	< 0.001	Significant
Time-Saving	0.358	< 0.001	Significant
Perceived Convenience	0.215	< 0.01	Significant
Promotional Influence	0.134	< 0.05	Significant
Price Sensitivity	-0.089	> 0.05	Not Significant

The core hypothesis that psychological drivers outweigh economic rationality is supported by the simulated regression analysis in TABLE II. The "Need for Instant Gratification" (β = 0.412) and "Time-Saving" (β = 0.358) are the strongest predictors of usage frequency. Conversely, "Price Sensitivity" (β = -0.089) is a weak and statistically insignificant predictor. This implies that for typical Q-commerce use cases like urgent or top-up purchases, the consumer's decision is not dominated by price. They demonstrate a willingness to absorb ancillary costs in exchange for immediate resolution of their need [16, 98].

C. Q-commerce as a Catalyst for Impulse Buying

The analysis reveals a strong, positive correlation between the frequency of Q-commerce use and the Impulse Buying Score. This suggests the platform itself is a powerful catalyst for unplanned purchases, consistent with data showing 75% of users report an increase in such buying [38, 101, 103]. Q-commerce fosters a "feel-and-react" model, collapsing the time between desire and consumption to minutes. It makes purchasing an instantaneous response to a fleeting thought or craving, triggered by the platform's interface [33, 39, 106]. The knowledge that an item will arrive in minutes provides the immediate dopamine release associated with gratification, reinforcing the behavior [15, 106]. This repeated cycle could erode the habit of planned, budgeted purchasing, a salient concern for the Gen Z cohort, who are highly susceptible to impulse buying driven by online trends [48, 108, 109].

V. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the adoption of 10-minute delivery in India is deeply rooted in the psychological appeal of instant gratification. For time-scarce urban consumers, the ability to resolve an immediate need supersedes traditional economic considerations like price. Q-commerce platforms have built a model that caters to

this desire while engineering an environment that stimulates and normalizes impulse buying. By shortening the gap between desire and consumption, they are creating new purchasing occasions and altering consumer habits from planned events to spontaneous reactions.

The implications for businesses are significant. Q-commerce platforms should continue to focus on solving immediate problems and reducing purchase friction. For FMCG and D2C brands, Q-commerce is an indispensable channel for driving impulse trials and reaching consumers at the critical moment of desire [50, 116]. A dedicated strategy, including channel-specific product sizes and on-platform advertising, is crucial [39, 116]. This study's primary limitation is its reliance on simulated data. Future empirical research should validate these findings. Further inquiry is needed into the long-term impact on consumer financial health and the sustainability of the 10-minute model, especially as it expands into Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities [5, 23, 119, 120].

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