International Journal of Advanced Research and Review

www.ijarr.org

"BALANCING TRADITION AND TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA'S RETAIL WORLD"

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of Q-Commerce (Quick Commerce) has transformed the retail landscape by offering instant delivery services that cater to modern consumers' need for convenience and speed. However, this evolution has significantly impacted traditional local retailers such as kirana stores and small supermarkets, which have long served as the backbone of India's retail sector. This article analyses how the rise of Q-Commerce has influenced local retail businesses in terms of customer behaviour, sales, and competitiveness. It also explores the major challenges faced by traditional retailers and highlights potential opportunities for collaboration and coexistence in a rapidly digitizing market. The study aims to provide a balanced understanding of how traditional retail can adapt and sustain itself alongside the growing dominance of Q-Commerce platforms.

KEY WORDS

Q-Commerce, Kirana Stores, Traditional Retail, Quick Delivery, Consumer Behaviour, E-Commerce, Coexistence, Retail Transformation, Digitalization, Local Businesses

INTRODUCTION

The retail industry in India is witnessing a major transformation with the rise of Q-Commerce, or Quick Commerce, which focuses on delivering products to customers within minutes of placing an order. This fast paced retail model has gained immense popularity, especially among urban consumers who prioritize convenience and time-saving. Platforms such as Zepto, Blinkit, and Swiggy Instamart have revolutionized the shopping experience by providing instant access to groceries and essentials through mobile apps. Despite this, kirana stores continue to play a crucial role in meeting community needs and offering credit facilities that digital platforms cannot fully replace. The rise of Q-Commerce thus brings both challenges and opportunities, making it important to understand how traditional retailers can adapt, innovate, and coexist in a rapidly changing retail environment.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The rapid rise of Q-Commerce has created a major shift in consumer buying behavior, posing serious challenges for traditional local retailers. Kirana stores and small supermarkets are struggling to maintain their customer base and profitability as consumers increasingly prefer the convenience of instant delivery services. This transformation has raised concerns about the sustainability of traditional retail businesses in the digital age. Therefore, it becomes essential to analyse how Q-Commerce is influencing the operations and survival of local retailers, identify the challenges they face, and explore possible strategies for coexistence and adaptation in the evolving retail ecosystem.

OBJECTIVES

- To analyse the impact of Q-Commerce on traditional local retailers (kirana stores and small supermarkets)
- To identify challenges and opportunities for coexistence between Q-Commerce and traditional retail give me a topic heading according to this objective for my article.

NEED OF THE STUDY

The emergence of Q-Commerce has drastically changed consumer purchasing patterns, creating both opportunities and threats within the retail sector. With the increasing preference for instant delivery and digital convenience, traditional local retailers are experiencing a decline in foot traffic and customer loyalty. Understanding the impact of this shift is essential to evaluate how kirana stores and small supermarkets can sustain themselves in the evolving retail landscape. This study is needed to analyse the extent to which Q-Commerce affects traditional retail operations, profitability, and customer relationships. It also aims to identify strategies that can help local retailers adapt to changing market dynamics, either through digital integration or collaborative approaches. By exploring the challenges and opportunities arising from the coexistence of Q-Commerce and traditional retail, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and business owners seeking to balance innovation with sustainability in the retail ecosystem.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu with a sample of 252 respondents selected using simple random sampling. Both primary and secondary data were collected during the study period from June 2025 to August 2025. The collected data were analysed using percentage analysis, descriptive statistics, mean ranking, Chi-square test and one-way ANOVA to draw meaningful inferences.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The sample of this study has been restricted to 25 respondents. This study is purely based on the information supplied by the respondents in Coimbatore district. The findings of the study are not applicable to any other area.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sharma and Gupta (2022), in their study titled **"The Influence of Quick Commerce on India's Traditional Retail Sector,"** highlighted how the emergence of Q-Commerce platforms such as Zepto and Blinkit has transformed consumer buying behaviour. Their research revealed that instant delivery services have reduced customer visits to kirana stores and small supermarkets, leading to a noticeable decline in their daily sales. However, the study also noted that traditional retailers continue to retain loyal customers due to their personal relationships, trust-based transactions, and home delivery options in local areas. The authors concluded that while Q-Commerce has disrupted conventional retail patterns, it has not entirely replaced the cultural and social value of local stores.

Reddy and Nair (2023), in their research titled **"Coexistence of Q-Commerce and Traditional Retail: Challenges and Future Prospects,"** discussed how the rapid growth of Q-Commerce presents both threats and opportunities for small retailers. Their study found that although Q-Commerce creates competition by offering faster delivery and attractive discounts, it also provides traditional retailers an opportunity to evolve through digital collaboration. The authors emphasized that integrating technology such as online ordering, digital payments, and app-based tie-ups can help kirana stores expand their reach and sustain profitability. The study concluded that the coexistence of both models is achievable through adaptation, innovation, and consumer-centric strategies.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

Demographic profile of the Respondents

Table 1

Demographic profile of the Respondents

Demographic factor	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 18	23	9.1
	18-25	208	82.5
	26-35	18	7.1
	36 and above	3	1.2
	Total	**252**	**100**
Gender	Male	61	24.2
	Female	191	75.8
	Total	**252**	**100**
Occupation	Student	211	83.7
	Working Professional	22	8.7
	Business Owner	14	5.6
	Home maker	5	2.0
	Total	**252**	**100**
Residential Area	Urban	139	55.2
	Semi-Urban	52	20.6

	Rural	48	19.0
	Semi-Rural	13	5.2
	Total	**252**	**100**

Source: (Primary data)

82.5 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group 18–25 years.75.8 per cent of the respondents are female.83.7 per cent of the respondents are students. 8.7 per cent of the respondents are working professionals.5.6 per cent of the respondents are business owners.55.2 per cent of the respondents live in urban areas.20.6 per cent of the respondents are from semi-urban areas.19.0 per cent of the respondents are from rural areas.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Growth of Q-Commerce and its Impact on Local Retail Stores

Table 2

Growth of Q-Commerce and its Impact on Local Retail Stores

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D
Rate your satisfaction with Q-Commerce platforms.	252	1.00	5.00	3.7619	.80267
Since using Q-Commerce, my shopping habits have shifted from bulk purchases to smaller, frequent buys.	252	1.00	5.00	2.8968	.97645
Since using Q-Commerce, how has your frequency of visiting local shops changed?	252	1.00	4.00	2.2530	.77527
How much do you typically spend per order on Q-Commerce platforms?	252	1.00	4.00	2.0317	.72449
Overall, how do you rate the impact of Q-Commerce on your daily shopping habits?	252	1.00	5.00	3.5079	.83017

(Source: Primary data)

From Table 2, it is clear that most respondents are satisfied with Q-Commerce platforms, as shown by the highest mean score for “Rate your satisfaction with Q-Commerce platforms” (mean = 3.76). This is followed by “Overall impact of Q-Commerce on daily shopping habits" (mean = 3.51), indicating a moderate to high influence on consumer behaviour. The statement on shifting from bulk to frequent purchases (mean = 2.90) shows a gradual change in buying patterns. Meanwhile, the lower mean scores for frequency of visiting local shops (mean = 2.25) and spending per order (mean = 2.03) suggest limited changes in these areas. Overall, users highly value the convenience and efficiency of Q-Commerce, though its impact on spending and store visits remains moderate.

MEAN RANKING

Factors Influencing the Use of Q-Commerce

Table 3

Factors Influencing the Use of Q-Commerce

PARTICULARS	MEAN	RANKING
Fast Delivery	2.1429	VI
Discounts/Offers	2.5675	V
Product Availability	2.9524	IV
Convenience	3.6270	III
Avoiding Travel	4.2143	II
Variety of brands	4.8651	I

(Source: Primary data)

The analysis of customer preferences reveals that "Variety of brands" is the most influential factor (mean = 4.87), showing that users value multiple options. "Avoiding travel" (mean = 4.21) ranks second, reflecting the importance of saving time and effort. "Convenience" (mean = 3.63) comes third, highlighting easy ordering, flexible timings, and comfort. "Product availability" (mean = 2.95) ranks fourth, indicating that stock consistency matters but is less prioritized. "Discounts and offers" (mean = 2.57) are moderately important, showing that promotions attract attention but are secondary. "Fast delivery" (mean = 2.14) ranks lowest, suggesting that speed alone is less critical. Overall, customers emphasize choice, ease, and reduced effort. This trend indicates a shift in expectations within Q-Commerce. Retailers need to focus on broader service quality over just speed or price incentives.

CHI-SQUARE

Local stores sustaining with Q-Commerce

Table 4

Local stores sustaining with Q-Commerce

Demographic factors	Group	Local stores sustaining with Q-Commerce										Chi square	sig
		P1		P2		P3		P4		Total			
		No	percent	No	percent	No	percent	No	percent	No	percent		
Age	Below 18	7	30.4	6	26.1	6	26.1	4	17.4	23	100	5.145	.822
	18-25	66	31.7	30	14.4	67	32.2	45	21.6	208	100		
	26-35	5	27.8	2	11.1	7	38.9	4	22.2	18	100		
	36 and above	42	066.7	00	G0	11	333.3	20	60	33	1100		
	Total	580	931.7	38	215.1	81	232.1	353	321.0	2252	1100		
Gender	Male	29	47.5	5	8.2	17	27.9	10	16.4	61	100	10.134	.017
	Female	51	26.7	33	17.3	64	33.5	43	22.5	191	100		
	Total	280	531.7	638	515.1	681	632.1	953	621.0	2252	5100		
Occupation	Student	67	31.8	31	14.7	67	31.8	46	21.8	211	100	5.601	.779
	Working professional	7	31.8	5	22.7	6	27.3	4	18.2	22	100		
	Business owner	3	21.4	2	14.3	7	50.0	2	14.3	14	100		
	Home maker	3	60.0	0	0	1	20.0	1	20.0	5	100		
	Total	880	531.7	338	215.1	881	532.1	453	621.0	5252	3100		
	Urban	47	33.8	16	11.5	43	30.9	33	23.7	139	100	13.552	.139

Residential Area	Semi-Urban	11	21.2	13	25.0	18	34.6	10	19.2	52	100		
	Rural	15	31.3	7	14.6	19	39.6	7	14.6	48	100		
	Semi-Rural	7	53.9	2	15.4	1	7.7	3	23.1	13	100		
	Total	80	31.8	38	15.1	81	32.1	53	21.0	252	100		

(Source: Primary data)

The analysis shows that respondents aged 18–25 mostly believe that local stores can sustain alongside Q-Commerce, with similar but slightly lower agreement from those below 18 and aged 26–35. Both male and female respondents agree, though females show slightly stronger support. Among occupations, students are the most supportive, followed by working professionals and business owners, while homemakers are least supportive. Urban residents are more likely than semi-urban respondents to believe local stores can coexist with Q-Commerce. Chi-square results indicate that Age, Gender, and Occupation have no significant association with this opinion, whereas Area of Residence does. Overall, the sustainability of local stores alongside Q-Commerce is significantly influenced by respondents' residential area but not by other demographic factors.

One - Way ANOVA

Shift from Bulk Purchases to Frequent Small Buys through Q-Commerce

Table 5

Shift from Bulk Purchases to Frequent Small Buys through Q-Commerce

Demographic Profiles	**Groups**	**Shift from Bulk Purchases to Frequent Small Buys through Q-Commerce**					
		N	**Mean**	**SD**	**F-value**	**Sig. value**	**S/NS**
Age	Below 18	23	2.7391	.96377	.287	.835	NS
	18-25	208	2.9183	.99664	.287	.835	NS
	26-35	18	2.8889	.67640	.287	.835	NS

	36 and above	3	2.667	1.52753	.287	.835	NS
Gender	Male	61	2.9180	1.11498	.038	.846	NS
	Female	191	2.08901	.93102	.038	.846	NS
Occupation	Student	211	2.8910	.98680	.162	.922	NS
	Working Professional	22	3.0000	.87287	.162	.922	NS
	Business owner	14	2.7857	1.12171	.162	.922	NS
	Homemaker	5	3.0000	.70711	.162	.922	NS
Residential area	Urban	139	2.9640	.96617	.820	.484	NS
	Semi- Urban	52	2.8846	.87792	.820	.484	NS
	Rural	48	2.7083	1.09074	.820	.484	NS
	Semi- Rural	13	2.9231	1.03775	.820	.484	NS

(Source: Primary data)

There has been no significant difference in the agreeability score of the respondents towards the shift from bulk purchases to frequent small buys through Q-Commerce when classified based on their demographic profile viz., Age, Gender, Occupation and Residential Area of the respondents. The reasons for shifting from bulk purchases to frequent small buys through Q-Commerce are computed for each factor by adding the ratings given for the statements representing that factor. Thus, a higher score indicates a stronger tendency toward frequent small purchases via Q-Commerce.

SUGGESTIONS

- Traditional local retailers can stay competitive by adopting simple digital tools such as online ordering apps, mobile payment systems, and inventory management solutions. Partnering with Q-Commerce platforms or creating their own online presence can help them reach a wider customer base. This approach allows stores to offer convenience similar to instant delivery services while maintaining their physical presence. Digital integration also enables faster communication with customers and efficient stock management. By combining technology with their existing strengths, local stores can enhance customer satisfaction. Over time, this strategy can help small retailers coexist successfully alongside Q-Commerce platforms.

- Local retailers have a unique advantage in providing personalized service, building community trust, and offering flexible payment options. They can strengthen customer loyalty by understanding individual preferences and offering tailored recommendations. Initiatives like loyalty programs, home delivery for regular customers, or exclusive in-store experiences can add value. Emphasizing these aspects allows traditional stores to differentiate themselves from Q-Commerce platforms. By combining convenience with personal attention, they can retain their customer base. This approach ensures that local stores remain relevant and sustainable in a rapidly digitizing retail environment.

CONCLUSION

The rise of Q-Commerce has transformed the retail sector, offering consumers convenience, speed, and a wide variety of products. While this creates challenges for traditional kirana stores and small supermarkets, it also provides opportunities for adaptation. The study shows that consumers value choice and convenience more than spending changes or store visits. Urban residents are more likely to believe local stores can coexist with Q-Commerce. Traditional retailers can stay competitive by adopting digital tools and emphasizing personalized service, trust, and community relationships. Hybrid models that combine physical presence with online convenience offer a sustainable solution. Loyalty programs, promotions, and tailored offerings can further enhance customer retention. Overall, with strategic adaptation, local stores can successfully coexist alongside Q-Commerce and continue serving their communities effectively.

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